

A
GENTLEMAN's
RELIGION:

WITH THE
Grounds and Reasons of It.

IN WHICH
The Truth of Christianity in
general is vindicated; Its Sim-
plicity asserted; And some In-
troductory Rules, for the dis-
covering of its particular Do-
ctrines and Precepts, are pro-
posed.

By a Private Gentleman.

L O N D O N :

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GENTLEMAN'S RELIGION:

WITH THE

Grounds and Reasons of It.

PART I.

I. SINCE almost all Men
(however different
in other Opinions and
Interests) have ever
agreed in this, That there is
a God, to whose Power all
Things are subject; That the
true Service and Worship of
God (which is called Religi-
on)

on) shall be rewarded with Future Happiness ; and, That the Neglect and Contempt of Religion shall be punished with Future Misery ; Every Man surely has reason to believe thus much at least, That what is so generally and firmly believed may be possibly, nay and is probably, a Truth. And wheresoever there is a possibility, and much more where there is a probability, of a great Good on the one hand, and a great Evil on the other ; there certainly every Man is contented to enquire into the reality of the thing ; that he may not miss of the one, if it be attainable, nor fall into the other, if it be avoidable. I conclude therefore,

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fore, That it is a very great folly for any Man to give over searching after the True Religion, untill he has found it; Except he were able to demonstrate, either that there is no God; or else, that there is no Worship or Service due to him.

II. In all Matters of great and serious Consequence, no Man that is wise, will act by chance, and at random, without being able to give some Reason for what he does. For he that does any thing, and knows not why, is more likely to do himself Hurt than Good; because there are more Ways to the former, than to the latter. Since therefore Religion is a thing of the greatest Moment and Importance that can be,

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I conclude, that *no Man ought to chuse his Religion blindly, and by chance; but that every Man ought to have some Reason for what he professes. Whatever Religion, therefore, a Man is bred up in from his Youth, it certainly is very fit for him, when he comes to Years of Discretion, to enquire into the Grounds and Reasons of it.* For otherwise it is not possible for him to know whether he be in the Right, or the Wrong; in the way to Heaven, or Hell.

III. If there be a God, and if he requires any service or worship (*i.e.* any Religion) from us, it is undoubtedly for this End, that it may be a Trial of our Faithfulness and Obedience to him.

Now,

Part I. Religion.

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Now, whosoever has a mind to prove his Servant, whether he will be faithful and obedient, he will not give him such dark and intricate Commands, as shall puzzle him to find out the meaning of them; (For, how can a Servant approve himself faithful and obedient, if he be uncertain what it is that his Master requires from him?) But he will surely give him such Commands and Directions as are easie enough to be understood, however difficult they may be to be enterprized, or accomplished. I conclude therefore, That *all the Duties of Religion, which God requires of any Man, must needs be easie enough for him to understand, however hard they*

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may be to be practised. For, otherwise, Religion would be a Trial rather of a Man's Wit and Cunning, than of his Faithfulness and Obedience. And therefore also I cannot but conclude, That *most*, if not all the *Controversies* about Religion, which at this Day distract the World, do not proceed from any Difficulty in or about the Determination of all things necessary in Religion it self; but partly from the Pride of some Learned Men, who have loved to start new and difficult Questions, and to impose their private Sentiments upon the World, that they might be admired for their Wit and Subtilty; partly from the Covetousness and Ambition
of

Part I. Religion. 7

of some, whether Learned, or Unlearned, who have found that their Worldly Interest will be better served by some Doctrins (no matter how false and precarious) than by others ; and partly from the Prejudice of most Men, who are apt, with great Zeal and Eagerness, to contend for all those things which, from their Childhood, they have been taught to have a Reverence for. And I farther conclude, That whosoever has a sincere desire to embrace True Religion, must lay aside Pride, Ambition, Covetousness and Prejudice, which would mis-guide him ; and follow his sober and unprejudicate Reason, which will ever lead him in the right Way.

A 5 IV. There

IV. There are different sorts, or rather degrees of Assurance, which Men have concerning Things. Some things are evident of themselves, without any Proof; some things we are assured of, by the Testimony of our Senses; some things we receive as Truths, because we find them to follow from other Truths already received; and some things we believe only upon the Testimony of others. Moreover, some things we are persuaded of, without any Doubt or Diffidence; whereas other things do seem, at best, to be but likely or probable, and that too in a different degree, according as their Evidence is stronger, or weaker. Now, every

every sober Man, where he has certain Evidence of a thing, there he acts with Assurance ; where the Matter is but probable, there he proceeds with Caution : But where a Man is under a Necessity of doing one way or other, and where the Matter appears doubtful on both sides, there it becomes him to weigh the Reasons on both parts with due Consideration; and according as he finds the greater Probability to be on the one hand rather than the other, so to square his Actions accordingly. Since therefore every Man must necessarily either live religiously or not live religiously; I conclude, that
if upon a serious Consideration
of

of the matter, there appear to be more probable Reasons and Arguments for Religion than against it, every wise and sober Man must embrace Religion. This I say, not but that I think there are even demonstrative Arguments for Religion; and not so much as one probable one against it: But because that which to me seems demonstrative, to another may appear but probable, I thought it fit to note, That every Man in point of common Prudence is obliged to follow Religion, if it does but appear more likely and probable to him than Irreligion.

V. Whether it is possible for any Agent to produce a
new

new Being purely out of nothing, may with much shew of Religion be doubted: As also Whether meer Matter alone, without any other Agent or efficient Cause, can ever be able to work it self into any different Species or Forms. But this appears as certain as any thing can be; That where there is neither any Agent or efficient Cause to work, nor any Matter or Subject to be wrought upon, there it is utterly impossible for any thing ever to be produced into Being. Since therefore I find that there are many things which actually have a Being and Existence, I conclude, That of *absolute necessity there must be something*

thing or other which has been from all Eternity, and never had a Beginning. For otherwise, if we suppose that ever there was a time when nothing at all did exist, it follows, from what has been said, that it would be utterly impossible that any thing ever should be produced into Existence.

VI. Since of necessity we must acknowledge something to have been Eternal, I cannot but conclude, That *the Eternity of such a Being as God is described to be, is much more probable and fit to be believed, than the Eternity of such a Being as I see this World to be.* For when I go about to convince a Nation of the
Eternity

Eternity of the World (I mean in the like Posture that now it is in) there do occur, to my Mind such Difficulties, or rather Impossibilities, as I think no Man can digest. For he that affirms the World, as now it stands, to have been Eternal, must of Necessity grant that there has been an Eternal Succession of Men, Beasts, and Vegetables, and that to a number actually infinite: (for if the number be not infinite, how can the Succession have been Eternal?) And yet a number actually infinite to me appears to be a plain Contradiction. For that which is infinite cannot be made bigger, whereas there is no number but may be made
bigger

bigger by the Addition of Units. Again if any one shall affirm that an infinite number is no Contradiction ; and that there has been a Succession of such a number of Beings in the World ; then thus I argue, That if there has been a Succession of an infinite number of Men, Beasts, &c. then, by a Parity of Reason, there has been also a Succession of an infinite number of Days and Nights ; and if so, then likewise of an infinite number of Years too ; (for if the number of Years can be limited, so can that of Days too, since every Year contains just such a certain number of Days.) Now this I suppose must be granted
me.

me, That infinite numbers are equal; (for if one number be less than another, how can it be infinite?) And if so, then it must follow that in the Eternity of the World the number of Years is equal to the number of Days, which is absurd; because every Year contains in its self a number of 365 Days. These Difficulties, or rather Impossibilities, I say, do make the notion of the World's Eternity (I mean as the World now is) to appear to me as an absurd and unreasonable Supposition. But then as to God, Although I confess it to be difficult, and perhaps impossible, for Man to comprehend the manner, how he is,

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is, or can be, eternal without beginning; yet since the thing it self is so uncontrollably evident that something is so eternal, (though the manner how is to me incomprehensible) I find no other Scruple or Difficulty in admitting the Eternity of God. For though it seems contrary to all reason to affirm an eternal Succession of divers things, one after another, without a Beginning; yet I can find no manner of Repugnancy in maintaining that there is one immutable Being (*i. e.* God) which never began to be.

VII. Whether the matter, of which this visible world is framed, has existed from all Eternity,

Eternity, or whether it were produced out of nothing by the Almighty Power of God, is a Question which reason alone, I think, can never determine. But when I contemplate and consider the great Variety, Order, Beauty, and Usefulness, which do evidently appear in all the Parts of the World, as they are placed together, and answer one another; I cannot but conclude, That *the whole World, and all its Parts, are contriv'd, framed and fashioned, by a wise and powerful Being, whom we call God*: As when I see a curious Clock or Engine, I presently conclude that it was made and contrived by some Artist; and should laugh at
that

that Man who would offer to say that it was formed and fashioned only by chance.

VIII. That Miracles (*i.e.* wonderful Works, surpassing the ordinary course of Nature and Power of Art) have been wrought for confirmation of the Truth of Religion, is a thing that I shall take for granted at present, because it will appear to be proved beyond any just Exception in the Sequel of this Discourse; And from thence, I think I may most reasonably conclude, That *there is a being Superiour to Nature, who can command and controll it as he pleases, i.e.* in other Terms, *That there is a God.*

IX. The

IX. The Histories of all Ages, and Travellers into all Countries, do universally concur in this Testimony, That there is no Nation or People, whether learned or unlearned, but what do own the being of a God. And those few Persons who have presumed to deny it, have ever been look'd on as Prodigies and Monsters of Mankind. Furthermore, even those few who have denied the Being of God, have ever been Men of such debauched and profligate Lives, that we have great Reason to believe that they first have wished that there might be no God to punish them; and then, without any other ground or Reason,

Reason, have believed, or rather pretended to believe, what they have wished. For it is almost ever observed, that when debauched and atheistical Persons do draw near to Death, they do either renounce their Atheism, own the being of a God, and make Supplication to him; or at least have their Minds possessed with such doubts and fears, as plainly shew that they have still a strong Suspicion that there likely may be a God, for ought they know, who will call them to an Account for all their Wickedness. Since then all sorts of Men, both learned and unlearned, and all Nations of Men, both civil and barbarous,

rous, have always owned the Being of God ; since his being has never been denied but by very few indeed ; since that denial has rather proceeded from their Wishes and Desires, than from their Reason and Understanding ; and lastly, since they have not been able wholly to extinguish the Belief of a God out of their Minds although they have earnestly endeavoured it ; I conclude, That *the Belief of a God, in Man, is neither the Effect of Chance, because 'tis Universal, nor of Ignorance, because it possesses the most Learned, nor of State-Policy, because 'tis received among the most barbarous and unciviliz'd People ; but that*

that *there is a God, who has made all Men, and has (as a Token of his Work) stamped and engraved this his Mark and Character upon them.*

X. There is no Man of common Sense, who builds a convenient and goodly Structure, but he takes care likewise to keep it in good Order and Repair, after it is built. And there is no Fabrick but, in Tract of Time, will visibly decay, if constant care be not taken of it. Since therefore, God has erected and framed this goodly Structure of the World; and since in so long a time there is no Manner of decay to be found in it (as is abundantly proved by *Hackwell*, in his *Apology*

pology on this Subject) I conclude, That *God, not only made this World by his Power, but also governs it by his Providence.* And for the only Objection, which seems to be of any Force against God's Providence; namely, that wicked Men do often thrive and prosper, whilst good and Vertuous Men are oppressed with Misery; it is most easily and naturally solved, by supposing, (what shall anon be proved) That there are abundant Rewards for good Men, and sufficient punishments for the wicked, to be distributed in a Life which is to come; which will bring all things to be equal at the last.

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XI. Every Parent, who begets and brings up a Child; every Master, who feeds and pays a Servant; every Prince, who governs and protects his Subjects; and every Benefactor, who does any act of Kindness for another; may very reasonably, and do always, expect a Return of Love, Obedience and Gratitude, in due Proportion to the Benefits received from them. Since then *God* is more than a Parent to us, for he made us and our Parents too; since he is so kind a Master, who gives us our Food, and all the Conveniences of Life; since he governs and protects us, by his over-ruling Providence, more effectually
than

than any earthly Prince does his Subjects; And lastly; since he is our greatest and supreme Benefactor, who has given us all the good which we possess and enjoy; I cannot but conclude, that *he expects a return of Love, Obedience and Gratitude from us* (I will not say proportionable to the Benefits received from him, for that, perhaps, may exceed our Ability; but) *proportionable unto our Ability or Capacity.*

XII. That God is wise and powerful; I gather from his Work, which I contemplate in the Visible World. And from thence I conclude, That *he will sufficiently punish those Persons who despise him, so far as not to love, thank and*

obey him, according as he expects and requires from them. That he is also good and gracious, I gather from those good things which he has bestowed upon us, relating both to our Bodies and Minds. And from thence I conclude, That he will abundantly reward all those persons who take care to pay him that Love, Gratitude and Obedience which he expects.

XIII. That these Rewards and Punishments are not finally distributed in this Life is very evident ; Because we often see Men , that are notoriously wicked, enjoy all the pleasures ; and others, that are conspicuously vertuous, undergo almost all the Calamities of this World , even unto their

their very Graves, I conclude therefore, That *there is another Life, after this, in which these Rewards and Punishments shall be duly distributed.*

XIV. When a Man is once convinced that there is a God, to whom there is a Service due; and that there are Rewards and Punishments to be dispensed to all Men, according as they have performed or neglecting that Service; the grand Enquiry that every Man is concerned to make, is, What he must do to avoid these Punishments, and to be made Partaker of these Rewards. And here I think I may most easily and naturally make these following

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Conclusions; viz. 1. He who does what God requires from him shall not be punished but rewarded. 2. God requires from every Man that he should use his honest Endeavour, by all means, to know and understand his Will as perfectly as he can. For this is but Reason for every Master to expect from his Servant; much more for such a Master as God. 3. If a Man does his heartiest and best Endeavour, first to know and then to perform the Will of God; God will require no more from him. For to me it seems utterly inconsistent, with the Wisdom of God to expect, and with his Goodness to require, any more from a Man than what he is able to perform;

form; *i.e.* any more than his best and most hearty Endeavours.

XV. There are, in the general, but two ways of finding out, and knowing the Will of God. The one is by the use of our natural Reason and Understanding; the other is by attending to that Revelation which God has made of his Will, to the World. Here then I conclude, *I must make it my Business, first to enquire into the Truth and Reality of this Revelation; and then, to make use of that, and my Reason together, in order to find out what is God's Will.*

XVI. That there was such a Person as *Jesus of Nazareth*, in *Galilee*, in the time of *Tibe-*

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rius Caesar, the *Roman* Emperor ; That he had a Company of poor Men for his Disciples ; That He and his Disciples went about the Country of *Judea*, Teaching and Preaching ; That he was put to death upon the Cross, after the *Roman* manner, under *Pontius Pilate*, the *Roman* Governor of *Judea* ; That after his Death, his Disciples went about into all , or most, Parts of the then known World, Teaching and Preaching that this Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World , and that he was risen from the Dead, and gone into Heaven ; That in a few Years they converted a very great Number of People, in all places, to this Belief ;

Belief; That the Professors of this Belief were called Christians; That they were most cruelly persecuted, and many Thousands of them put to death, and that with most exquisite Torments, for no other Reason, but because they were Christians; That these Persecutions were several times renewed against them, for the space of about Three Hundred Years; And yet, for all this, that the Number of Christians daily increased, and that not only Ideots and Unlearned Men, but great Scholars and Philosophers were converted to Christianity, even in the Times of Persecution; All this, being merely Matter of Fact, was never yet

denied by the greatest Enemies of Christian Religion. And, indeed, these things are so abundantly testified by the Histories, and other Writings, of those Times; and have been so generally receiv'd for Truth, as well by the Opposers, as Believers of Christianity, by a constant, universal, and uninterrupted Tradition, from those Days, even unto this Time; that a Man may as well deny the Truth of any, or of all, the Histories of the World, as of this. Now, since all Men generally have a strong Inclination to retain and stick to that Religion (whatever it be) in which both they and their Fathers have been brought up; and no less an Aversion to all
cause.

causeless Innovations in Matters of Religion ; Moreover , since all Men , without exception, who are in their Wits, have naturally a most earnest desire to preserve their Lives as long as they can, and to keep themselves free from Pain and Trouble ; I think I may reasonably conclude, that *there must have been some extraordinary strong, and even irresistible Motive, which could prevail upon such Multitudes of People to forsake theirs and their Ancestors old Religion, and to embrace Christianity* , which then had but newly appeared in the World , and which, in those Days, did seldom fail to involve its Profelytes in most grievous Troubles and Persecutions.

XVII. That this Motive could not be the Hopes of any Profit or Advantage in this Life, is most evident: Because Christianity was, in those Days, most commonly persecuted, even unto death. It must therefore, of necessity, be the hopes of some Benefit or Happiness which should accrue to them, after this Life was at an end. And this Benefit or Happiness could not seem small and inconsiderable to them; nor could the Hope which they conceived of it be weak, or doubtful: For there is scarce any Man, or ever was, in the World, who would run himself into certain Misery and Persecution, even to the losing of his Life, only upon a
weak

weak and doubtful Hope of some small and inconsiderable Benefit or Happiness to be enjoyed in a Life to come. I conclude therefore, That the Primitive Christians were undoubtedly possessed with a strong Belief, and most firm Persuasion, That whosoever should truly embrace, profess, and live according to, the Christian Religion in this Life, was certainly to be made Partaker of some great and inestimable Happiness in the Life to come.

XVIII. That this Belief and Persuasion did not proceed from any Frenzy, or Madness, (which sometimes possesses Man with very strong Imaginations,) is very evident; both because there was such a Multitude

titude of them, who exactly agreed in the same Sentiments; and also, because it appears, both from the Writings and Actions of the Primitive Christians, that they were Men of Reason and Sobriety, and some of them Persons of great Learning. As evident also it is, that it could not proceed from the Force of any Argument, drawn from the Principles of bare Natural Reason, without Revelation. For, What Man in his Wits, without pretending some Revelation from Heaven, could ever be persuaded, that the Embracing of the Religion taught by such a particular Person, more than another, would make him happy in the Life to come? I conclude.

clude therefore, That *the Disciples of Jesus, who preached Christianity abroad in the World, did convince and satisfy their Profelytes, that it was revealed by God from Heaven, that whosoever would believe on Jesus, and receive, and live according to, his Religion should be made very happy in the next Life,*

XIX. The main Argument which the first Preachers of Christianity made use of, to convince the World that this was a Divine Revelation, was this; *viz.* Because that Jesus, in his Life time, did perform such and so many Miracles, and wonderful Works, as sufficiently shewed, that he had his Commission and Power from

from God; and because his Disciples (whom he had appointed to teach his Religion to the World) for many Years after his Death, did likewise continue to work many Miracles in the Name of Jesus; Which shewed, that God was with them in what they did and taught. The things by them alledged to have been performed by Jesus, were such as these: That he healed all manner of Diseases and Distempers with a Touch, or barely with a Word speaking; That he gave Sight to the Blind, Hearing to the Deaf, Speech to the Dumb, and Strength and Agility to the Lame and Maimed; That he raised several Persons from the Dead; and

and that he himself arose from the Dead, after he had been Crucified, and a Spear thrust into his Vitals, and had lay'n dead in a Sepulchre unto the Third Day ; And lastly, That, after his Resurrection, having several times appeared to his Disciples, and conversed with them, for the space of Forty Days, he was, at last, openly, and in their sight, taken up alive into Heaven. The things alledged to have been done by his Disciples, were, The Healing the Sick, the Lame, the Maimed, &c. and, in a particular manner, their Speaking all Languages, although they never had learned them. That all these things were pretended by the first Preachers of Chri-

Christianity, is confessed on all Hands. And, undoubtedly, they must needs, at least, *pretend* something that was very extraordinary, or else they never could have converted such vast Multitudes, under so many Disadvantages as they and their Religion laboured. That these things were not only pretended, but really and actually performed, is, to my Opinion, uncontrollably evinced from the Testimony of the Disciples themselves, Who declared these things for Truth unto the World ; Who could not themselves be deceived in those Matters of Fact, of which they pretended to have been Eye-Witnesses ; Who never would go about to impose a
Lye

Lye upon the World, by which they could propose to themselves no manner of Advantage in this Life, nor (if it were a Lye) in the Life to come; Who never would have exposed themselves to Poverty, to Racks, to Gibbets, to Fire and Faggot, (in a Word) to all sorts of Torments and Deaths, only for the sake of a fruitless and unprofitable Fable; Who being Men of unblameable Lives, for their Morality, had, doubtless, more Honesty and Integrity, than to affirm those things for certain Truths, which they must needs know to be meer Inventions; Who were too many in Number, and too void of Craft and Guile, to combine together

together in framing a false Story, and none of them ever to betray or discover the Cheat; Who could never hope to impose the Belief of such a Story upon a curious and inquisitive Age (such as that was wherein they lived) if it had been false, and therefore would certainly never have attempted it, if they had not known it to have been true; And, Lastly, who, instead of convincing such Multitudes as they did, must needs have been palpably discovered, and exposed to the World for a Company of lewd Cheats and Impostors, in pretending that such and such things were done in the Land of *Judea* and *Jerusalem*, (and done openly too,

too, in the Face of the World,) when it was so easie a matter to go or send to the place, to make Enquiry, and so to find out the Cheat, if a Cheat it had been. But that these same Miracles, and wonderful Works, did far surpass both the Course of Nature, and the Power of Art, is very evident; That they were not perform'd by the Assistance of any wicked Spirit, does sufficiently appear; because the very Intent and Design of them was to propagate a Doctrine in the World, which, by all, must be allowed to teach the purest, and most strict Morality; to which it cannot be imagined, that any Impure and Evil Spirit would contribute any help.

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It remains therefore, that these things must needs have been performed, either by the immediate Power and Assistance of God, (who is both the Framer and Controller of Nature) or (which is the same thing in effect) by the Mediation and Ministry of good Spirits, who always act obediently to his Will. So that (whether mediately, or immediately) it is God who is to be looked upon as the Original and Author of all those wonderful Things, which were done by Jesus, and his Disciples. Now then ; Since God did interpose his Power, to work such strange and stupenduous things, for the Propagation and Confirmation of that Doctrine which was taught

taught by Jesus and his Disciples; This I think, is a sufficient Demonstration, that their Doctrine was certainly true. For, Who can imagine that God should make use of his extraordinary Power, only to cheat and deceive the World into the Belief of a Lye? I conclude therefore, That *the Primitive Christians had sufficient Reason to believe, that it was revealed by God from Heaven, that whosoever would believe on Jesus, and receive, and live according to his Religion, should be made very happy in the next Life*; this very thing being the grand Point of Doctrine, which Jesus and his Disciples taught and preached to the World. And if we are
sure

sure that the Primitive Christians had Reason sufficient to believe this; from hence it follows, *That we have sufficient Reason to believe it also.*

XX. But Jesus himself being long since ascended into Heaven, and his Disciples, who first preached the Gospel, departed out of the World; here, *I think, it is necessary to enquire, to whom, or to what I must apply my self, that (amidst the several Parties in the World, who all call themselves True and Orthodox Christians, each condemning all others but themselves) I may be truly and surely informed what is the true and genuine Religion or Doctrine of Jesus, which I ought to receive, and live according*
to

to, in order to my future Happiness. For, if I do not this, I must either reject the Doctrine of Jesus, and so lose my future Happiness; or else take it altogether upon Trust, and by chance, and then 'tis odds but I light upon the wrong, and must needs run a very great hazard. And though he who is in a Mistake, and cannot tell how to help it, will, doubtless, find an easie Pardon from God; yet he who falls into Errour, for want of moderate Care and Diligence to find out the Truth, has, I think, no pretence either to Pardon, or so much as to Pity.

XXI. The *Roman Catholics* do tell me, that I must apply my self to the Church.

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This Church they define to be, that Society of Persons who profess Faith in Jesus Christ, and live in Subjection to, and Communion with the Pope, or Bishop of Rome. This Church they say is infallible; and not only does not, but cannot err in any Doctrine of Religion, Go then, say they, to this Church, and receive the Doctrine which she teaches; and there you have, certainly and infallibly, the true and pure Doctrine of Jesus Christ. But I cannot give my Assent to follow this their Direction, because I find such great Difficulties in my way as, I think, are insuperable; at least, I am sure, such as I am not able to overcome. For, *First*, Although

it may be a certain Truth, that there shall always be a Church, that is to say, a Company of People, some where or other, professing the true Christian Religion, as long as the World shall last; yet what solid Proof can be brought, that this particular Society of Men, who live in Communion with the Pope, or Bishop of *Rome*, are alone the true Church, and shall always keep and maintain amongst them the true and uncorrupt Doctrine of Jesus Christ? This Matter being a Question of Revelation, and positive Institution, is incapable of being proved by any Argument drawn from Natural Reason. And, as for the Texts of Scripture which they

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alledge, it is even ridiculous to think, that any sober and unprejudiced Person should be convinced by them; (as will evidently appear to any one, who impartially reads what the *Romish* and Protestant Divines have written on this Controversie:) For there are none of those Texts, but are fairly and naturally capable of another Interpretation; and must be very much strained and wrested, to make them countenance the *Romish* Doctrine. Besides that, the Divines of the Church of *Rome* do generally teach, That no Man can be sure of the Authority or Sense of any Text of Scripture, (especially if it appear to be any way doubtful,) except he receives
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the Proposal and Interpretation thereof from this their Church, which they say is infallible. So that a Man must of necessity believe the Infallibility of their Church, before he can any way be sure of the Credit, or even of the Sense, of those Texts of Scripture which they bring to prove it. And then, What need is there of Scripture-Arguments to prove a thing, which must be acknowledged, before the Arguments can have any force, or even be as much as certainly understood? And if they tell me, that the Fathers, and ancient Christian Writers, do testifie thus much of the Church of *Rome*; I can only say, that the Protestant Divines (who
C 3 seem,

seem to me to be Men of as much Learning and Integrity as the *Romish*) do declare, that it is far otherwise. Nor have I Skill enough in Language and Antiquity, to take upon me to judge of this Dispute. Neither do I understand, by what Authority the Writings of those Persons, who are acknowledged to have been subject to Errours, should be obtruded on me as a Rule of my Faith, or as a sufficient Argument to determine my Assent in so weighty a Matter. *Secondly*, Supposing, but not granting, that in the Church of *Rome* the true and pure Doctrine of Jesus Christ was preserved; yet still it is granted, that particular and private
Men

Men, who live in the visible Communion of that Church, may teach false and corrupt Doctrine. Here then I demand, How shall I certainly distinguish the Doctrine of the Church, from the Opinions of private Men? And how shall I certainly know what is the true Meaning of the Church's Doctrine? They of the Church of *Rome* are not agreed who it is, that has Authority to declare and expound the Doctrine of their Church; whether it be the Pope, or a General Council; or neither alone, but both together. Or if they were unanimous in this Point, yet how shall I know whether such a particular Person, who possesses the Chair, be a true

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and lawful Pope ; or such a particular Assembly , a true and lawful General Council ? Or, Suppose they could satisfie me in this Demand, yet there is no Council now sitting, nor, if there were, could I go to them, or to the Pope, to receive Instruction ; nor can the Pope, or a Council, be at leisure to satisfie the Demands of every private Enquirer. How then can I be sure that this or that particular Person does both rightly understand , and faithfully propose the Doctrine of the Church to me ? Especially, since there have been, and still are, eminent Members of the Church of *Rome*, who have accused each other of corrupt Doctrine, and even
of

of Heresie it self. But, *Thirdly and Lastly*, There do appear to me to be much stronger Arguments to prove that the Church of *Rome* has actually erred, and corrupted the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, (in the Case of Transubstantiation, and some other her Tenents,) than any that can be brought, to prove her to be infallible. And until I can be otherwise convinced, I cannot but conclude, That *to follow the Guidance of the Roman Church, is not the way to embrace the true and pure Doctrine of Jesus.*

XXII. Some there are who tell me, that, to find out the true and genuine Doctrine of Jesus, I must have recourse to the Tradition of the Church:

And thus they set forth the Matter. *First*, They suppose that the true and genuine Doctrine of Jesus was undoubtedly taught by his Apostles, and first Disciples. *Secondly*, That if any one did, or should have gone about to spread any false or spurious Doctrine, whilst these Apostles and Disciples were yet alive; They who were sent on purpose, by Jesus, to preach his Doctrine, and were owned, and submitted to accordingly by all Christian Churches, both could and would immediately convince all Churches of the falseness and spuriousness of such pretended Doctrine. *Thirdly*, That the Doctrine of Jesus being in all Churches publickly

ly and constantly taught and preached, every succeeding Age and Generation must needs know, and could not possibly be ignorant, what their Fathers, and immediate Predecessors owned and taught as such: *Fourthly*, That therefore, if, at any time whatsoever, any new or spurious Doctrine was, or should be, vented, by any Person or Persons, as the Doctrine of Jesus, all Christians must presently know that this was none of his Doctrine, because it was not taught them as such, by their immediate Predecessors. *Fifthly*, That therefore it is impossible that any new and spurious Doctrine could ever be broached in the World, as a
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part of the Doctrine of Jesus, but it must needs meet with great Opposition: For all Christians do maintain, That it is a Sin to teach, or knowingly to own, any thing as the Doctrine of Jesus, which is not really so. *Sixthly*, That however some Men, out of Pride or Interest, may own and contend for any such novel Doctrines, yet it is impossible that any such Doctrine should ever come to be universally received by the whole Church, except we could suppose, either that the whole Church should joyn together to involve themselves and their Posterity for ever in a Sin; or else, that a few Men, who first should vent an Opinion, could so impose upon the whole.

whole World, as to make them believe, that what they all must know to be a new and upstart thing (because they received it not from their Fathers and Predecessors) was a part of the ancient Doctrine of Jesus, which was all along, from Hand to Hand, delivered down to them: Both which things are absurd to conceive or imagine. And *Lastly*, That no part of the Doctrine of Jesus, once delivered, could ever be obliterated, or wholly forgot in the World; because every Age of Christians, from the very first, who undoubtedly received the whole and entire Doctrine of Jesus, knew themselves to be indispensably obliged, both by
God's.

God's Command, and also by that Love and Charity which they owed to their Posterity, to teach the same full and entire Doctrine which they received, unto their Children, and those who were to come after them. Go therefore to the Church (that is, to the Church of *Rome*, say the Papists; to the Universal Church, *i. e.* to all Christians, say some Protestants,) and see what are the Doctrines which are, and have been universally maintained; of whose Beginning no other Account can be given, but that Jesus and his Apostles taught them to the World: And there you have the entire and uncorrupted Doctrine of Jesus. But to this I answer,
That,

That, indeed, where there is an universal, or a very large and general Tradition concerning any thing; and where, from the nature of the thing it self, it appears to be highly rational and probable, that there is not, or could not be, any Errour or Mistake in the matter; in such a Case as this, no Man, I think, but an obstinate Sceptick, will offer to withstand the Evidence of such a Tradition. But, let a Tradition be ever so general, or even universal; yet, if it can be shewn, that there is not only a possibility, but also a fair likelihood, and probability, that there may be a mistake in the business; then, I think, no Man can justly be blamed, if
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he refuses or suspends his Assent, until the Testimony of such a Tradition be cleared and vindicated from those rational Prejudices and Exceptions which may lie against it. Now, if it were so, that all Errours and Mistakes did ever immediately appear in their perfect Form, and full Growth, at their very Beginning ; then it were most rational to conclude, that all Men must needs take notice of their first Appearance ; and consequently, that, in all likelihood, any such Error must needs meet with many more Opponents, than Abettors. But, on the contrary ; it may well be supposed, that Errours may have sprung up in the World, from such
small

small beginnings, and by such flow and unperceivable degrees, that, after some Ages, it may be impossible for a Man to discover them to be Errours, except he has some other Rule, besides Tradition, to try them by; *viz.* either the Rule of common Reason, or some ancient and unaltered Writing. As for Example; It is not rational to conceive, that, in the first Ages of Christianity, they who preached and writ popular Discourses, might, very innocently, and to good purpose, make use of Rhetorical Flights, and Figurative Expressions, to strike the Fancies, and move the Affections of the People to Vertue and Piety? And is it not likely enough, That those
who

who came after them, might not only strive to imitate, but also to out-do them, in bolder Flights, and more strained Schemes of Expression? And is it not also probable enough, That, in long process of Time, Ignorance, generally overspreading the Face of the World, and being joyned with a profound Veneration for those ancient Preachers and Writers, might begin to interpret some of these Rhetorical and Figurative Expressions in a Literal and Logical Sence; and then conceive, that such their Interpretations were really and truly the ancient Doctrines delivered down to them? Especially if we consider, that there may have been
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some Men of great Power and Repute in the World, who might have taken a pride and delight, or whose Interest it might have been, to amuze the People with mysterious Notions and Fancies, and to keep them ignorant of the Truth. And thus it appears to be, not only possible, but also probable enough, That Errors and Mistakes, as to the ancient Doctrine of Jesus, might come to be generally received, without any considerable or notorious Opposition given to them; or that such Opposition might soon be suppressed and over-ruled by the Power and Reputation of such prevailing Men. From all which I cannot but conclude,
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That though the general Tradition or Testimony of the Church may be a good Help, yet it may not always be a certain Rule, to lead me to the entire, and unaltered Doctrine of Jesus.

XXIII. Other there are, who tell me, That, to find out the true and entire Doctrine of Jesus, I must apply my self to the holy Scripture; that is to say, to the Books commonly called the *Old*, and the *New Testament*. And because I look upon this to be the right Way, I shall briefly and plainly deliver my Thoughts, in relation to these Books. And first, of the *New Testament*. That the *New Testament*, as it was extant in the Greek Tongue, has been ever universally owned by

by all Christians, as containing a true (though some deny it to be a full) Account of the Life and Doctrine of Jesus, is a thing so notorious, and so universally acknowledged, that I cannot find the least Ground or Reason to question it. Now the History and Doctrine of Jesus being so well known unto the first Christians, by the Preaching of the Apostles and Disciples ; and they being so ready, upon all Occasions, to lay down their Lives for the Truth of Christianity ; it cannot be imagined that ever they would so readily and universally receive and own such a Book, if it had contained any thing in it which was dissonant from that Doctrine which they

they had received. It is confessed, indeed, that some of those Books which make up the Volume of the *New Testament*, (that is to say, the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, that of *St. James*, the Second of *St. Peter*, that of *St. Jude*, the Second and Third of *St. John*, and the *Revelations*,) were not so soon, and so universally received, throughout the Christian Church, as the rest of the Books were. The Reason of which, apparently, was not, That these Books contained any thing in them contrary to what was delivered in the other Books of the *New Testament*, (for he that reads the whole, will plainly find, that there is a very compleat Agreement

ment between them ; the only seeming Discord, of *St. Paul's* Justification by Faith, and *St. James's* Justification by Works, being exactly and fully reconciled, by considering, That *St. Paul* means no other Faith, but such as worketh by Love, *Gal. 5. 6.* and *St. James*, no other Works, but such as proceed from Faith, *Jam. 2. 22.*) But because it was not at first universally known, who were the Authors of them. Which abundantly shews the Care and Caution of the Christian Church, in not being hasty to receive and admit any Books, as authentick Records of their Doctrine, without very good Warrant for so doing. And therefore, since these same Books

Books were, in a very little time after, received, and owned to be of equal Authority with the rest of the *New Testament*; I cannot but from thence conclude, That those Churches which, at the first, doubted concerning those Books, did soon receive most full and ample Satisfaction in that matter, from those who had before received them. I conclude therefore, That *the Book of the New Testament, as it was extant in the Primitive Times, in the Greek Tongue, did contain a true Account of the Doctrine of Jesus.*

XXIV. That innumerable Copies of the *New Testament* were, in a very little time, dispersed through all places where

where Christianity was planted; That it has been, at different times, and in very distant places, translated into all (or almost all) Languages; And that Copies, both of the Original, and many of the several Translations, have been preserved with much Care, in a great many distant Parts of the World, is allowed by all, and denied by none. From whence I think we may gather, *First, That where the Generality of the Greek Copies of the New Testament do agree in the very same Words, there we have, undoubtedly, the true and authentic Words of the New Testament.* For, although some Mistakes might creep into some Copies, either through
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the Wickedness or Negligence of some particular Men; yet, where so many Copies of a Book have been so carefully preserved, and in such distant Parts of the World, it is not to be imagined, that the self-same Errour, in any Expression, should ever be propagated through the Generality of them. Secondly, That *where the Words or Expressions of divers Greek Copies do differ one from another; yet if the Sense and Meaning be exactly the same in all, or almost all; there we have certainly the true Sense and Meaning of the New Testament.* For it is easie to apprehend, that a Transcriber might, by a small Mistake, put one Word or Expression of the same

same Signification, in stead of another: But that the same Sense should be punctually preserved in all, or almost all, Copies is not to be imagined, except it were the true Sense delivered from the Beginning. Thirdly, That *if there may be found any different Readings in divers Copies of the New Testament, which disagree in Sense, as well as in Words,* (which scarce ever happens in any thing which is accounted a material Point of Religion) *then it seems to be most fit and proper to admit of that Reading and Sense which best agrees with the Tenour of the whole; with the ancientest, and best esteemed Translations; and with the evident Principles of sound Reason.*

And if any place be so obscure, as that none of these Ways will afford any Light into its Meaning, then I think that no stress ought to be laid upon it in any necessary part of Religion.

XXV. But some will demand, How are we sure of the Sense and Meaning, even of those places of the *New Testament*, where there is no difference about the Words? In Answer to this, I have already shewn, (§. 21.) that we are not to follow the Guidance of the Church of *Rome*, to know the true Doctrine of Jesus; Nor therefore, consequently, to know the true Meaning of the *New Testament*, in which his Doctrine is owned to be contained. I have shewn also, (§. 22.)

(§. 22.) That though general Tradition may be a good Help, yet may it not always be a certain Rule to lead one to the unaltered Doctrine of Jesus ; nor therefore, consequently, to the true and genuine Interpretation of the *New Testament*. Since therefore there is no other way to be found, I conclude, That *the New Testament is to be interpreted the same way that other Books are* ; that is, by considering the Sense and Property of the Words and Sentences, and the ordinary Figures of Speech, as they are commonly used in the same Book, and in others written in the same Language, and about the same, time ; together with the Scope,

Drift, Coherence, and Occasion of the Discourse. *To which End, every Man that is learned, being bound to use his best Endeavour to know the Will of God, (as I have shewn, §. 14.) is obliged, according to the measure of his Learning, to consult Lexicons, Commentators, and ancient Writers, and to use all other Helps; that he may both satisfie himself, and also be able to inform others.*

XXVI. But perhaps I shall be told, That when a Man has done all this, to the best of his power, yet, after all, he may be mistaken; as it appears, that many Learned Men are; since they oppose and contradict one another about the Meaning of the *New Testament*. To this I answer,

swer, That since I have shewn,
(§.3.) that all necessary things
(whether as to Belief, or Pra-
ctice) in Religion, are easie to
be understood ; I must from
hence conclude, That *a sober
and honest Enquirer cannot easily
be mistaken in the Interpretation
of those places of the New Te-
stament, which do contain any
necessary part of Religion.* And
as for other parts and passages
of it ; if Men would be but
peaceable, (which is plainly
enough commanded in the
New Testament,) their Mistakes
about them could do no harm.
And , again ; Since I have
shewn, (§. 14.) That God re-
quires no more from a Man,
but his best Endeavours to
know and perform his Will ;

I do hence conclude, That if a Man be mistaken in his Interpretation even of any such place as contains some necessary part of Religion; yet, if this Mistake be purely an Errour of the Understanding, and does not proceed from any Neglect, or wilful Fault of the Person so mistaking; God will never be offended with him for it. And then, What hurt can there be in such a Mistake as this?

XXVII. But it may be demanded, What shall they do to find out the Meaning of the *New Testament*. who do not understand any thing of the Greek, which is the only authentick Language of this Book? Which is evidently the Case of much the greatest part of
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of Mankind. I answer, That *he who is ignorant of the Greek Tongue, being yet obliged to use his best Endeavour, (§. 14.) must do the best he can, by reading some Translation, or Translations of it ; (or, if he cannot read himself, by hearing them read ;) and by asking and enquiring from such of his Acquaintance as he believes to be Persons of Sincerity and Knowledge, to know what is the Sense and Doctrine of the New Testament, and the Will of God therein contained. And, since God requires no more from any Man, but his best Endeavour, (§. 14.) it follows, That if such a Man be mistaken, and cannot help it, God will not be offended with him neither for it.*

XXVIII. And one thing more let me add, for the sake of those who are not skilled in the Greek Tongue; *viz.* That since there have many Translations been made of the *New Testament*, most of them by Persons well skilled in Languages, of good Repute for their Honesty and Integrity, and who could not but know before-hand, that their Translations would be narrowly sifted and examined by learned Men; (which must needs make them careful to commit as few Faults as they could;) and since all those things which God requires from Men, must needs be easie enough to be understood, (§. 3.) and therefore easie to be translated and expressed

pressed in any Language ; I cannot but conclude, That a *sober and impartial Enquirer* may be very well assured of the *Doctrine of Jesus*, even from the *Translations of the New Testament*, though he does not understand the *Greek Original*. And, for as much as I can understand of the matter, if Men did stand only upon the honest and downright Sense and Meaning of plain Places, (which only can give us good Assurance in Religion,) and would not quarrel about critical Niceties in such Texts as are confessedly obscure, I believe there is scarce any Translation of the *New Testament* so defective, but might be a sufficient Guide to any sober Man, to lead

lead him to the Doctrine of Jesus.

XXIX. Having thus spoken what I designed of the *New Testament*, I come to say something of the *Old*. And here, that the *Jews*, in the Days of Jesus, had among them a Book, written in the *Hebrew*, and some small part of it in the *Chaldee-Tongue*, which we now call the *Old Testament*, which they called the *Holy Scripture*, and esteemed as the Word of God, is a thing beyond dispute. That this Book was owned and acknowledged, quoted and referred to, and all People exhorted and encouraged to search and study it, as the Word of God, both by Jesus himself, and also by his Disciples,

sciples, is most evident to any one who reads the *New Testament*. From whence I must conclude, That *the Doctrine of that Book, as it was then extant, is to be esteemed as part of the Doctrine of Jesus; and that those Laws and Commands which are there to be found, are to be kept and observed by all Christians, the Followers of Jesus; except where it can be shewn that Jesus has freed us from the Obligation of them.*

XXX. Moreover, since this Book has been Translated into as many Languages, and as many Copies of the Original have been carefully kept, in distant Parts of the World, as of the *New Testament*; I do conclude, That *the very same things*

things which just now were said concerning the Words, the Meaning, and Way of interpreting the New Testament, will hold good concerning the Old Testament also, as far as they can be accommodated to it.

XXXI. There are some certain Books and Fragments, which among the Protestants are well known by the Name of *Apocryphal*, to which the Papists give the Title of *Deuterocanonical*. These Pieces the Papists contend to be a real part of the *Old Testament*, and of equal Authority with the other Books of it: But the Protestants will not allow their Authority to be sacred, although they grant that there are many useful and profitable things
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contained in them. Now, he that is not able to search into Antiquity, for the Resolving of this Controversie, may by another way be satisfied about it. For, since the *Jews* (from whom the Christians originally received the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*) do all of them, and ever did, unanimously reject these same *Apocryphal* Books and Fragments, as being no part of their Holy Scripture; I think it may from hence be sufficiently concluded, That, *as to the Controversie about the Apocryphal Scripture, the Protestants are in the right, and the Papists in the wrong.* And yet, if the Authority of those Pieces were as great as the Papists would have

have it, I see not how it could make any Alteration in my Religion. For I do not find any thing in them, but what is easily reconcilable with the rest of the holy Scripture.

XXXII. But there are some Difficulties which seem to arise concerning what I have discoursed, to which it will be necessary to give a full and satisfactory Answer. And, *First*, If all be granted that has hitherto been said ; yet, how shall I be sure that the Book of the holy Scriptures contains, not only truly, but also fully and entirely, the Doctrine of Jesus ; so that nothing is to be esteemed as a part of his Religion, but what is contained in the Scripture ? To this I might

might answer, That there are several Passages in the Scripture it self, which do give us to understand, that the whole Law and Will of God, as far as it is needful for Man to know them, are contained in those holy Writings; (as the Protestant Divines do sufficiently make appear, in the Management of this Controversie against the Papists.) But, waving this, I think it is enough to say, That *it is not, indeed, impossible in it self, but that Jesus might have made known other Particulars of Doctrine, and of the Will of God, besides what is consigned to us by the Scripture. And if any Man can effectually prove, that any such Doctrine or Precept was delivered by him;*
I think,

I think, that whosoever is convinced of the Proof, ought to believe that Doctrine, and obey that Precept, which appear to be so delivered. But he that does his hearty and sincere Endeavour to find out the Doctrine and Will of God, delivered to Man by Jesus, and is not able, with all his Diligence, to discover any more of it, than what is resorded in the Scripture; if he faithfully keeps and observes as much of it as he is able there to discover, it is plain that God requires no more from him, (s. 14.) and therefore certainly will not punish him, for want of any thing farther.

XXXIII. *Secondly, It may be objected, That in Reading these Books, there do appear to be some Passages which are in them-*

themselves absurd, and contrary to the plain Dictates of every Man's Reason and Understanding; and some which are irreconcilable with one another. Now, that the Doctrine of Jesus is certainly true, must be allowed, because it is confirmed by God. That both parts of a Contradiction cannot be true, is acknowledged by all Men: And no Man, I think, can own that for a Truth, which is contrary to the plain Dictates of his Reason and Understanding; which to every Man is, and must be, the Standard of all Truth whatsoever. For there can be no Reason why any Man receives and owns any thing for a Truth, but only because
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he apprehends it to be conformable unto the plain and self-evident Notions which are already planted in his Mind. Here then it may be demanded how it can be possible that these Scriptures should contain the *true and uncorrupted* Doctrine and Religion of Jesus? To this I answer: *First*, That I cannot find any appearance of a Contradiction, throughout the Holy Scriptures, in any Point of Doctrine, or Rule of Manners, but what is so easie and obvious to be reconciled, that no Man, I think, of Candour and Ingenuity, but would be ashamed to object it. *Secondly*, And, as for those few seeming Discordances, which do occur in the Circumstances of some Historical Nar-

Narrations; though I, perhaps, am not able to reconcile them, yet it may be that the things themselves may not be absolutely irreconcilable. But suppose they were, yet it is no derogation to the Truth of the History, (as to the main substance of it,) or of the Doctrine contained in the holy Scriptures, that some of the Sacred Writers have been mistaken in the Relation of some small and inconsiderable Circumstances. There are several Historians and Chroniclers, which give an Account of the Life and Reign of many of our Kings of *England*; and although they differ in many Circumstances of things, yet this was never made an Argument to doubt of the Truth of
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the main History, wherein they all agree. And why may not the Scripture-Historians be as favourably censured as all other Historians in the World are? *Thirdly*, There are many things which are above my Reason and Understanding, which I cannot comprehend in my Mind, nor frame a clear and distinct Notion of; which yet I cannot say, are contrary to my Reason: Because (though they are above my reach, yet) I do not find that they do contradict any of those plain and self-evident Principles which are implanted in my Understanding. For Example, I am not able distinctly to apprehend how the smallest Particle of Matter, which can be assigned,

signed, is yet in it self capable of being for ever divided ; so that no part of Matter, though ever so small, can ever be so much as convinced to be absolutely invisible. And yet this is so far from being contrary to my Reason, that my Reason it self does fully satisfy me that the thing is so, though I am not able to comprehend the manner of it. The same thing also may be said concerning the necessity of some thing being without any Beginning. (of which, see §. 5, 6.) Now *if I meet with any thing in Scripture which is thus above my Reason, but not contrary to it, I cannot refuse my Assent unto it.* (I mean always, upon a Supposition that the Words do appear

pear evidently to carry such a Sense.) For I cannot conclude such a thing to be impossible: Because I do not find it contrary to my Reason, though above it. And if it be a thing in my Apprehension possible, I must believe it to be true, when I find that God has declared it so to be. Other things, again, there are, which are directly contrary unto those self-evident Notions and Principles, which my Reason finds to be connatural with it self. For Example; That *a Part is equal to the Whole*; and such like Absurdities. Now, *if any such Propositions as these, which are contrary to my Reason, should occur to me in Scripture, I cannot possibly believe them to be*

be true in a Literal Sense ; (for that were to renounce the clear Dictates of my Reason and Understanding, upon which the Certainty of all things which I believe or know, is ultimately built ; and without which, I could have no Certainty of the Being of God, or the Truth of any Religion ;) and therefore I must needs understand them to be meant figuratively. And that Figure which best agrees to such Words, according to the most common Custom of Speech, and is most conformable to common Sense and Reason, I think, is always to be preferred. I never read any Book, to my knowledge, but in it I found many Expressions which, taken literally

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and strictly, were absurd and ridiculous; but, taken figuratively, as 'tis evident they were intended, did contain very good Sense and Meaning. Since then the Holy Scriptures were written in such Words and Expressions as were commonly used among Men in Speaking and Writing, why should we think that strange in them, which is so usual in all other Books?

XXXIV. *Thirdly*, It may be objected, That this Doctrine which I have taught, leaves every Man entirely to his own Reason and Understanding, to find out the true Religion, and the Way to Heaven. Now, since there is so great a difference between the Notions and
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Sentiments of different Men, it must needs follow, that, all Men being left wholly to themselves, there must necessarily be great Variety, and even Contrariety, of Opinions among them concerning Religion. And if God requires no more from every Man, but to do his best Endeavour, and to chuse that way which he thinks to be the truest; from hence it will follow, That two Men who are contrary one to another in the Point of Religion, may yet both be in the right Way to Heaven; and a *Turk*, or a Heathen, may be saved, as well as a Christian, if they are but strongly persuaded that they are in the right. I answer; *First*, That if the

Objection means, that I leave every Man to his own Reason and Understanding, without any other help, to find out the Trut of Religion, it is a mistake. For I have asserted, That every Man, according to the Measure of his Learning, ought to make use of all the Means and Helps he can, to understand the Scriptures, and the Will of God. (See §. 14. and §. 25.) But if the Meaning be, That *I leave every Man to chuse that Religion which, after a serious Enquiry, appears to him to be the best*; (which is all that I contend for;) In this I say no more than what all Men must, and do, say, as well as I. For, either a Man must never enquire into the Truth

Truth of his Religion at all, (and then he chuses his Religion by mere chance ; and since there are many false Religions, and but one true, 'tis great odds but he lights upon a wrong one ;) Or, if he does enquire. either he must chuse that which he thinks not to be the best, (and then he acts against his Conscience,) or that which he thinks is the best ; Which is what I assert, and what every Man of Sense professes himself to do. *Secondly*, As there are many Differences in the Notions and Sentiments of Men, concerning those things which are, in some measure, abstruse and obscure ; so, on the other side, there are many things so apparent,

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rent, and evident, that Men who are sincere and unbyassed, if they have but common Sense, can never differ about them : Amongst which, I think, I may reckon all those things which God requires of necessity to any Man's Salvation (§. 3.) And whereas the World has, for these many Years, found, that compelling Men to this or that Religion, contrary to their own Sentiments, has been so far from begetting Unity of any sort, that, on the contrary, it has even distracted Mankind, not only with Variety of Opinions, (each Party taking a delight to thwart other,) but also with War and Confusion ; If every Man were left to himself, to follow

follow what Religion he pleases, (as he shall answer to God for his Sincerity,) it is very probable that most Men, having no Worldly Interest to serve by this or that Religion, would in time, be brought to agree in all the great and necessary Truths of Religion; which are plain and evident to every sober and inquisitive Person. And as for things not absolutely necessary, and of an inferiour sort, (as I have said, §. 26.) if Men would be but peaceable, their Mistakes, and consequently their Differences about them, could do no great harm. But if Men will still differ even about the essential and necessary Parts of Religion, I know no Remedy for

it upon Earth ; but muſt refer the Matter wholly to the Judgment of God in Heaven. *Thirdly.* I do not maintain, That he who is in an Errour, that is, a *Turk*, or an Heathen, (whatſoever the ſtrength and ſincerity of his Perſuaſion may be,) is in as ſure a Way to Heaven and Salvation, as he who is an Orthodox-Man, and a Chriſtian. How God will deal with thoſe that are miſtaken, and cannot help it, I do not determine. All that I would inſinuate (§. 14.) is, That he will not puniſh any Man for any Errour, or Miſtake, which he falls into, through a pure Defect of his Underſtanding, and not through any Fault or Neglect of
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of his Will. But how far he will reward such a Person for his good Meaning, is more than I can tell.

XXXV. *Fourthly*, It may be objected, That this Doctrine does, in effect, undermine and enervate the Force and Power of all Civil Government, by opening a Way for all Malefactors to escape Punishment, how great soever their Crimes may be. If such a Person should plead thus for himself, That he was fully persuaded in his Mind and Conscience, that it was the Will of God, that he should commit such a Theft, or Murther, of which he is accused ; and that therefore, according to this Doctrine, it was his Duty, in the

sight of God, to act according to this Persuasion ; The Magistrate, who knows not the Hearts of Men, can never be able certainly to discover, but that this is a real Truth, that he was so persuaded. And if every Man, in all the Duties of Religion, is bound to act according to his own Sense and Persuasion of Things ; with what Conscience can a Magistrate punish such a Person for that Fact, which, for ought he knows, it was his Duty to commit ? I will not say, but that it may so fall out, that a Man may think it to be his Duty to commit the most horrid Villanies, since Jesus Christ himself assures his Disciples, That the Time would come, that

that whoſo killed them, would think he did God Service, *Joh.*

16. 2. And how far God Al-

mighty will be merciful unto

ſuch Perſons who commit ſuch

Facts out of pure Ignorance,

and not out of Malice, I had

rather *St. Paul* ſhould deter-

mine than I. (See 1 *Tim.* 1.

13.) But to the Objection, I

think it ſufficient to answer,

That the Civil Magiſtrate, as

well as other Men, is bound

to act according to the cleareſt

Conviction, and ſtrongest Per-

ſuaſion of his own Mind. If

therefore, upon the Examina-

tion of all Circumſtances, he

be well ſatisfied, and really be-

lieves, that ſuch a Plea from a

Malefactor is no real Truth;

but only a meſe Trick, and Pre-

tence,

tence, in hopes to escape Punishment; he ought to take no notice of it, but to pronounce his Sentence according to the Law. But that which comes up close to the Objection, and which, I think, is the fullest and truest Answer, is this; *viz.* That *the Civil Magistrate has nothing to do to enquire or regard how the Matter stands between God and the Conscience of the Transgressor of the Law of the Land, so as to be thereby any way influenced in the Passing his Judgment.* It is enough to him, if he be well and thoroughly convinced, that the Laws by which he acts are no way contrary to the known Law of God. There are many Cases where-
in

in a Man offends highly against the Law of God, in which the Civil Magistrate has no Power to inflict any Punishment on the Offender; because the Fault which he may have committed, does not, it may be, any way tend to the damage or disturbance of the Civil Society; Which, and which only, is committed to the Care of the Magistrate. Such, for Example, are many Acts of Covetousness, or of Prodigality, and other Sins; against which it is not possible to provide by any Humane Laws. And, on the other side, There are some Cases, wherein a Man may stand absolved before the Tribunal of God, and yet be very justly condemned

ned by the Magistrate. Thus, for instance, If a Man has committed Theft or Murther, and, upon a sincere and hearty Repentance, has obtained the Pardon of his Sins from God; yet, nevertheless, if such a Person be accused, and legally convicted, of such Crimes before the Civil Magistrate; He not only may, but ought to put the Law of the Land in Execution against him, though he believes him to be ever so penitent; That it may be a Terror unto others. For, if this ought not to be done, every Malefactor, by a pretence of Repentance, (which cannot certainly be discovered by any but God,) might escape the Lash of the Law: By which Means

Means all wicked Men would be encouraged to commit all sorts of Crimes. Thus also when the Children of *Israel* were commanded by God to conquer the Land of *Canaan*, we read how they sent Spies to make a Discovery of the Land, that they might the more easily invade it. Now it is most certain, that these Spies did nothing but what they had God Almighty's Warrant for; and yet, if they had been taken by any of the *Canaanitish* Magistrates, and legally convicted of their Design; Who doubts but that it had been lawful for them to have punished them, according to the Law of War, and the Law of Nations? For it is none
of

of the Magistrates Business, to enquire who keeps or transgresses the Laws of God; (for the Law of God extends to many Cases, where the Magistrate's Authority has nothing to do;) but they who transgress the Laws of the Land, and thereby disturb the Peace of the Commonwealth, are, upon a due Conviction, to be punished by the Magistrate, (without any farther Enquiry;) it being his Business to do every thing which appears to be necessary for the Preservation of the Weal-Publick, provided that he does nothing which is contrary to the known Laws of God, who is the supreme King and Lord of all.

XXXVI. But *Fifthly*, it will be objected, That whatever becomes of the civil Magistrate's Power, yet this Doctrine which here is taught, must certainly defeat and cancel all that Authority with which the Church is endowed and invested. For, though the civil Magistrate has no more to look after but only the Peace and Preservation of the Common-Wealth; yet surely it is the Duty of the Church to take Cognizance of those things which are committed merely against the Law of God. But how can the Church call any Man to an Account for any Sin or Transgression, when a Man may plead for himself, That he thought

thought it was his Duty ; which Plea, if really true (and who but God can disprove it?) is sufficient according to this Doctrine, to justify him before God ; and consequently to indemnify him from all Censures of the Church. To this I answer, That the Authority of the Church (*i. e.* of a Christian Society) is twofold: *viz.* Either that Authority wherewith it is invested immediately by God, or that which is conferred on it by the civil Laws and Constitutions of the Kingdom or Commonwealth. The latter of these is a civil Authority, though exercised by Ecclesiastical Persons, because it is derived altogether from the civil

civil Power, And therefore, the Consideration of it must be referred to what is but now said touching the civil Magistrate. But as for that Authority which is given to the Church immediately by God; it is evidently no more than this, *viz.* An Authority to preach the Gospel, and to persuade Men every where to receive it; and an Authority to exclude those Men out of the Society (that is, out of the visible Communion of it) who do not profess the true Christian Faith, and live according to the Christian Law. Other Authority than this does not appear to be given to the Church by God. And nothing that I have said, does in
the

the least tend to abridge them any way as to the Exercise of this Power. *The Church may and ought to preach the Gospel, and perswade men to embrace it. And however any Man may be excused before God by invincible Ignorance, yet he is not to be suffered in the visible Communion of the Church, if he does not believe and live as a Christian.*

XXXVII. *Sixthly*, it may be objected that I have several times in this Discourse made use of a Distinction, which Distinction is nevertheless render'd altogether useless and impertinent by the main Design of the Discourse it self. The Distinction is between *necessary* Matters of Religion
and

and such as are *not necessary*.
(which is referred to, §. 26.
and elsewhere) But if no Man
can be obliged in any Matter
of Religion, any farther than
to do his best Endeavour,
from thence it must follow,
That all things are alike neces-
sary in Religion. For whatso-
ever is within a Man's Power,
according to this Doctrine, is
necessary for him; and what-
soever is not within his Power
is not necessary; so that the
very same thing may be ne-
cessary in Respect of one Man,
and not necessary in Respect
of another; which confounds
the Distinction and renders
it useless. To this I answer,
That by *things necessary* I mean
all such as it is a Sin for a Man
to

to be ignorant of, if the Knowledge of them be within his Power. Such as are, That Jesus is the Son of God, That God is to be worshipped, &c. By things not necessary, I mean, Such as a Man is not obliged so much as to search after; the Ignorance whereof shall not be accounted sinful before God, although it might have been in a Man's Power to have known them. Such are a great many curious Speculations, which Divines do trouble themselves and the World with; which they themselves do yet confess, are not necessary to any Man's Salvation; and consequently, which a Man is no more obliged to trouble his Head with, than with any

Pro-

Problems, either in Geometry, or Natural Philosophy.

XXXVIII. *Seventhly*, It may be objected, That this Doctrine must needs encourage Men to continue in their Ignorance, and not to take any Care or Pains to inform themselves concerning the Truth of Religion, or any of the Duties of it. For, Why should a Man take any Pains to get more Knowledge, (which will, it may be, bring Trouble in the Practice of it,) when Ignorance is no manner of Bar to his Salvation? For, let him but live according to the Knowledge which he already has, and God, it seems, requires no more from him. To this I answer, That *for a Man*

Man to act according to the best of his Knowledge, will not serve his turn; except he has used his best Endeavour, by all Means, to know and understand the Will of God as perfectly as He can. (as I have shewn, all Men are bound to do, §. 14.) Which, though it is a Comfort to those who are ignorant, and cannot help it; yet is no manner of Encouragement or Excuse for those whose Ignorance is their own Fault or Neglect.

XXXIX. My Reason having thus brought me to embrace the Christian Religion, and directed me where and how to seek for the particular Doctrines of it; it follows now, that I should put this
this

this Speculation into Practice; that I would search the Scriptures with all the diligence I can, and set my Mind, with all its Faculties, on work, to find out as much as I am able of the Will of God, that I may the better conform my self unto it. This, with God's help, I design speedily to do: And the Result of my Thoughts shall be published to the World, if what I here write prove acceptable. But in the mean time, *I think it not improper here to add some general Considerations, which may serve as Rules and Guides to me, or to any other Person, who shall set himself upon such an Enquiry; to direct our*

F Judge-

Judgments aright, to the true Doctrine of Christianity, and to keep us from all Mistakes about it.

XL. *First*, Then, I take it for granted, That the Christian Religion is calculated for Men of Reason and Understanding; that is, That it is fit to satisfy and convince every sober Man, who seriously considers the Arguments on which it relies; and is not led astray by Passion, by Prejudice, or Worldly Interest. That this is so, appears very evidently from hence; Because both Jesus and his Apostles do appeal to the common Reason and Understandings of Men, to judge of what they taught.

Yea,

Yea, and why, even of your selves, judge ye not what is right? says Jesus, Luk. 12. 57. Prove all things, hold fast that which is good, says St. Paul, 1 Thes. 5. 21. Be ready always to give an Answer to every one that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you, says St. Peter, 1 Pet. 3. 15. Believe not every Spirit; but try the Spirits, whether they are of God, says St. John, 1 Joh. 4. 1. Hence then I conclude, That there can be nothing in Christian Religion, which contradicts the clear and evident Principles of Natural Reason. For otherwise, a Rational Man could not be a Christian. (See §. 33.)

XLI. *Secondly*, It appears plain to me, that Christian Religion was calculated, not only, nor chiefly, for Men of great and deep Learning; But also for those of ordinary, plain, and mean Capacities: That is to say, That there is nothing necessary in Christianity, but what may be as well understood by every ordinary, illiterate Man, as by the greatest Schollars. If this were not so, it would not be possible for an unlearned Man to be as good a Christian as one that is learned: Whereas the contrary is most apparently declared in the *New Testament*.
I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from

from the Wise and Prudent, and haſt revealed them unto Babes, ſays Jeſus, *Matth. 11.*

25. To which, the Words of *St. Paul* do exactly agree, *1 Cor. 1. 19. to Verſ. 7. of the Second Chapter.* And the ſame *St. Paul* gives us a Caution, That *Philology* ſhould not corrupt our *Chriſtianity*, *Col. 2. 8.* And warns *Timothy* againſt *Science*, *falsely* ſo called, *2 Tim. 6. 20.* But there is nothing ſo much as intimated throughout the whole *Bible*, that *Philology*, or any other *Humane Learning*, will qualifie a Man ever the better, to become a *Chriſtian*. I confeſs, indeed, That, as things ſtand at this time in the *World*, it is

highly convenient that the Teachers and Preachers of Christianity should be competently skilled in Humane Learning; that they may be the better able to defend their Religion, and the Purity of it, against those who use so much Art and Skill, either to corrupt, or oppose it. But where a Man sets up, not for a Teacher, but only for a true Believer, it is evident, from what has been said, that he has no need of Scholarship; but only of a plain and sober Understanding, to make him capable of all necessary Instruction for a good Christian. Or else, Why should the Gospel be preached so particularly
to

to the Poor, *Matth.* 11. 5. who are commonly illiterate? And how should the Poor in this World become so rich of Faith, as St. James tells us? *Jam.* 2. 5. From whence I think I may conclude, That all such Doctrines, the Understanding and Proof whereof depend either on the subtile Speculations of Humane Philosophy, or the Niceties and Criticisms of Grammatical Learning, or the curious Knowledge of History and Antiquity, are not to be esteemed as necessary Parts of Christianity.

XLII. *Thirdly*, It is no less evident to me, that the main Design of Jesus, and of his Disciples, whom he sent

to preach the Gospel, was, to make Men, not wiser as to Matters of Speculation; but better, and more virtuous, as to their Lives and Actions. *Knowledge puffeth up; but Charity edifieth*, saith St. Paul, 1 Cor. 8. 1. Thus also, Chap. 13. of the same Epistle, he gives us to understand, that the Gift of *Tongues* and of *Prophecy*, the Understanding of all *Mysteries*, and all *Knowledge*, and *Faith*, are of no value before God, without *Charity*. And that by *Charity*, he means a Life led in the Practice of Virtue and Piety, sufficiently appears by the Sequel of that Chapter. The same St. Paul tells us, Tit. 2. 13. That *the*
Grace

Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men; (For what End? To make them more wise, more learned, or more lofty in their Speculations? No such thing: But,) teaching us, That, denying Ungodliness, and Worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present World. And, to omit a multitude of Texts, which might be alledged in so plain a Matter; I shall only add what we are told, Rom. 2. 6, &c. That God will render unto every Man according to his Deeds; &c. Which is a plain Demonstration, that it is our Deeds, that is, our Practices, our Live and Conversations,
 b51 F 5 that

that we are chiefly obliged to take care of. I grant, indeed, that God may, if he pleases, command things that are purely Ceremonial, and such as have no manner of Influence upon Vertue and Morality; As undoubtedly he did unto the Children of *Israel*: And if he does command any such things, 'tis certain that we owe Obedience to them by virtue of that Authority which God has over us. He may also reveal such Truths as are merely speculative, and have nothing practical in them: And whosoever is convinced of any such Revelation, is undoubtedly bound to give his Assent to the things so revealed,

led, although they are beyond the Reach of his Understanding ; (as I have said, §. 33.) But from what I have here said, I think I may conclude, That *since Vertue and Morality are undoubtedly the chief Design of Christianity, they ought to be chiefly regarded, and attended to by all Christians. Nor ought any thing which is purely Ceremonial, or Speculative, to be reckoned as a necessary Part of Christian Religion ; except it appears very evidently, that God has revealed, or commanded it. Very evidently, I say : For, when a thing is conceived in dark and doubtful Expressions, it is very liable to be mistaken ; and he that*
is.

is guilty of such a Mistake, can very hardly be charged with a Fault.

XLIII. *Fourthly*, That the Knowledge of God Almighty, his Attributes, and his Law, may, in part, be gathered from the Light of Nature (antecedent to any Revelation) is evident from Reason, and acknowledged by St. Paul. *For the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even his Eternal Power and Godhead.* Rom. i. 20. (See Psal. 19. 1.) And when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the things contained in the Law, these
having

having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves; which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience also bearing Witness, and their Thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another, Rom. 2. 14, 15. Now although all things relating to Religion, which may be known by the Light of Nature, are, I think, again repeated and farther explained by the Holy Scripture; Yet because it may be that this will not appear so plainly to every one, I think it necessary here to Note, That we are obliged to give our Assent to those Truths, and our Obedience to those Laws

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Laws of Religion which we are able to discover by our Natural Reason, although the same should not appear to us to be again repeated in Scripture. For, for this very reason St. Paul pronounces the ancient Gentiles to be without Excuse, because that when they knew God, that is, had some Knowledge of him by their natural Understanding, they glorified him not as God, by owning and obeying him. Rom. i. 20, 21, &c. And what is it else but an Appeal to the natural Notions of Mankind, when he exhorts us, That whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things

things are pure, whatsoever things are Lovely, whatsoever things are of good Report, if there be any Vertue, and if there be any Praise, we should think on these things, Phil. 4. 8.

XLIV. *Fifthly*, He that writes a Treatise upon any Subject, whatsoever he has a Mind that his Reader should particularly observe and be convinced of, he will be sure to lay it down plainly as a main Conclusion; nor will he fail (if he be discreet) as often as Occasion requires, to repeat and referr to it, that the more Notice may be taken of his Meaning and Design. Such things as are mentioned only occasionally and collaterally,

terally and not as any part of the main Subject of the Discourse, are not always expressed with so much Care and Exactness, but that often even the meaning of them may be misunderstood. Nor can we be always certain what is the true Sense and Opinion of a Writer, from such accidental Expressions; (which sometimes may be used figuratively, sometimes by way of Allusion or Accommodation, sometimes with Reference to the Capacity of People, without any Regard to the literal Truth of them) except he gives us some farther Explication of his Mind. From whence

whence I think I may conclude, That *the necessary Doctrines and Precepts of Christian Religion, are not to be gachered from those collateral and occasional Expressions which are scattered up and down, in the Scriptures; but from the main Scope and Design of the whole Bible in general, and of each Book of it in particular.*

XLV. I have thus briefly and plainly given, I hope, a rational Account of Religion; and of Christianity in general. If I find that what I have here writ is likely to do any good in the World, I shall proceed, with God's Assistance, to draw out and publish

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publish a particular Account
of the Doctrines to be be-
lieved, and Duties to be pra-
ctised, by a Christian.

F I N I S.

Errata to the 2d. and 3d. Part.

PAge 48. l. 16. read *my own*. p. 59. l.
12. for *of* r. *and*. p. 82. l. 11. for *Love*
r. *live*. p. 110. l. 3. dele *it*. p. 113. l. 12.
for *every* r. *very*. p. 254. for *that* r. *than*.
p. 260. l. 16. r. *Office in a settled Church*.

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The 1st. contains the *Principles of Natural Religion.*

The 2^d. and 3^d. The *Doctrins of Christianity* both as to *Faith* and *Practice.*

With an *Appendix*, wherein it is proved, That nothing *contrary* to our *Reason* can possibly be the *Object* of our *Belief*: But that it is no *just Exception* against some of the *Doctrins of Christianity*, that they are *above* our *Reason.*

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A
GENTLEMAN'S
Religion.

Part II. & III.

In which the Nature of the
Christian Religion is parti-
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Explained.

LONDON:

Printed for Richard Sare at
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THE GENTLEMAN

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PART II & III

In which the Nature of the
Christian Religion is parti-
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Explained.

LONDON:

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A Short
PREFACE

To the whole.

Some Men slight
Religion, whilst
others corrupt and
perplex it with things
either false or unne-
cessary ; the later of
A 2 which

The Preface.

*which I look upon to
be much the cause of
the former.*

*Many will not take
the pains to read much;
and many do not thorough-
ly consider, nor will
digest what they read;
which renders their
Notions confused, and
themselves uncertain
what to conclude.*

*I have therefore
endea-*

The Preface.

endeavour'd to make
such a short and easy
Draught of Christiani-
ty and the Grounds of
it, as every Man of
a moderate Capacity
may read without Te-
diousness; and under-
stand without Difficul-
ty; And which, if it
does not wholly satisfie
him, may yet serve to
put his Thoughts into

The Preface.

a Method, and himself upon seeking for farther Satisfaction.

The first Part of this small Work I put forth some time since; and, finding that it has not proved altogether unacceptable to Men of Judgment and Moderation, I have been encouraged to finish and publish the
Second

The Preface.

*Second and Third Parts
also.*

My Design is certainly good; and if I have not well performed what I have undertaken, I hope at least that what I have here done, may move some more able and Judicious Person to take the Work in hand, and supply those Defects of which I have been guilty.

The Preface

Second and Third Parts
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T H E
CONTINUATION
O F A
Gentleman's Religion.

Being the Second PART.

I. **T**HE *Holy Scriptures*
being the only au-
thentick Record
that I am able to find of the
Christian Religion, I take it
for granted that they *do ex-*
press Divine Matters really and
truly as the things are in them-
selves : And therefore I can-
B not

not but believe that all the Doctrin therein delivered is most certainly true, altho many times I am not able to understand the Design and Meaning of some Expressions and Passages which do occur therein. I think it indeed to be very proper, that Men of any reasonable Learning and Prudence should modestly offer their Thoughts to the World, in order to the explaining of such Places of the Scriptures as appear to be abstruse and difficult: *But he who speaks his own Words* (and not those of Scripture) *can therein only offer his own Apprehensions*; to which no Man can be obliged to subscribe, any farther than as he is in his own Reason convinced of
of

of the Truth of them, and their Consonancy with the Scriptures.

2. I do not apprehend that an implicit Faith is due to the Church of *Rome* which challenges it (Part 1. §. 21.) much less sure to any other Church which does not require it. *When*, therefore, any Church, much more when any private Men, do offer me any Doctrine of Religion in their own Words, I think I ought to consider, First, *Whether what they say is intelligible*: (For tho we may be obliged to believe such things as are above our Understanding to comprehend, (Part 1. §. 33.) yet it is impossible for any Man to give an explicit Assent to any Form

of Words, if he does not know the meaning of them.) Secondly, *Whether it is agreeable to the self-evident Principles of Reason*, for, If I apprehend it to be otherwise, it is impossible for me to believe it. (Part I. §. 33.) Nor must any Text of Scripture be interpreted above the Level of plain and self-evident Reason, whatever the literal Sense may seem to be. And, Thirdly, *whether the Truth of it can be proved by any solid Argument*, either from Reason or Scripture : for tho a Doctrin be both intelligible and possible, yet still it may be false; and therefore is not to be believed except it can be proved. These Rules I have endeavoured

Part II. Religion. 5

voured strictly to observe in the Trial of those Doctrins which I am now about to propose ; and I desire my Reader carefully to make use of the same, in the Examination of all that I shall offer unto him. But here I must desire him to take notice, that I do suppose him to be well acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, and also with the common Arguments, upon which the several Parties of Christians do ground and maintain their Opinions: And therefore, for his Ease, as well as my own, I shall save my self the Labour of mentioning such Arguments and Places of Scripture, as are usually brought to prove those Points which are generally

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rally acknowledged by all Christians, and even in those Points which are controverted between different Parties, I shall ordinarily think it enough to hint at some of those Texts, and Arguments, which are used on either side ; of which I can scarce suppose any Man to be ignorant that is but moderately acquainted with the Principles of Christianity, and the several Parties that profess it.

3. *To believe what God makes known, and to do what he commands, is what all Men call Religion : But things that are impossible, 'tis certain that God requires from no Man (Part 1. §. 14.) When therefore Damnation is denounced*
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in Scripture *against those who receive not the Gospel, it must needs be understood only of them in whose Power it was to have received it*; and not of such who are invincibly ignorant; either for want of Capacity, *John 9. 41.* or of the means of Knowledge, *Joh. 15. 22.* But for a Man who has both the Capacity and Means of Knowledge, through Negligence, to continue in Ignorance of God's Will, my Reason tells me is a very great Sin; besides all those Places of Scripture which do require us diligently to seek after Knowledge.

4. That *there is a God*, is sufficiently to be proved from our own Reason and Observa-

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tion : *But fully to comprehend his Nature, or declare in all Points what he is, is by all allowed to be impossible to us.*

5. That God never had a Beginning, I think I have sufficiently concluded (Part 1. §. 6.) And, if the holy Scripture had not told me that he is from Everlasting to Everlasting; yet my own Reason would have inferred that *he is subject to no Decay, nor ever shall have an Ending.*

6. The Nature of every Material Being seems necessarily to imply a Possibility of having its Parts disjoyned and separated one from another; and consequently of being dissolved and destroyed: And therefore I conclude, that the
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Part II. Religion.

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eternal *God does not consist of Matter*; and that Being which is intelligent, and does not consist of any material Parts, I call a Spirit: And this is what I mean when I say that *God is a Spirit*. As for those Expressions *the Eyes of the Lord*, *the Arm of the Lord*, and such like, which do occur sometimes in Scripture, and seem to imply Bodily Parts, it is manifestly obvious that they must be purely metaphorical.

7. Our Experience does sufficiently testify that whatsoever is visible to us, is ever material. Since therefore *God* does not consist of Matter, I conclude that he *is invisible to Mortal Eyes*, as the Scripture

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positively declares him to be :
And all those Texts which
seem to say, that he has been
seen by Man, I think must of
necessity be interpreted some
other way, *viz.* either, 1. Of
an Angel appearing in a glori-
ous and majestic manner :
Or 2. Of the eternal Son of God
assuming a Bodily Appear-
ance, as after he took our Na-
ture upon him : Or, 3. Of
some visible and extraordinary
Signs and Tokens that the in-
visible God was there present
in an extraordinary Manner :
Or, 4. Of those mystical and
Hieroglyphical Representati-
ons which God has sometimes
been pleased to make of him-
self, not to the Senses, but to
the Imagination and Under-
standing

standing of his Prophets, in their extatick Dreams and Visions.

8. Amongst all those things which I can conceive possible to be done, *i. e.* to imply no Contradiction, I can find nothing which to me appears more difficult, than what God has already done in the Structure of the Universe: And therefore I conclude, that God can do whatsoever in its self is possible to be done, which is what I mean when I say, that *he is Almighty*: Nor is there any one, sure, who will venture to say, that God can do such things as imply a Contradiction, either in themselves, or to his own Nature and Attributes.

9. That

9. That God, who made all things, should be ignorant of any thing, appears to me most absurd to imagine. But when I say, that *God is Omniscient*; If there is any thing, the Knowledge of which would manifestly imply a Contradiction, it could surely be no greater Irreverence to say, that God could not know, than that he could not do such a thing. But whether the Knowledge of a future Contingent would imply a Contradiction or not, is a very abstruse and metaphysical Dispute; and except the contrary can very clearly be made appear, I know not how to imagine that God is, or can be ignorant of any thing
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past, present, or to come, however contingent.

10. If God were or could be confined to, or circumscribed in any determinate Space or Place, it would be hard to conceive that his Knowledge and Power should be infinite, and extend to all Places. But I cannot suppose God to be present in all Places after the same manner, as the Air is every where present throughout its Region, or the Light throughout its Hemisphere, for that would imply local Extension; and consequently, that he were a material Being, contrary to what I have said, §. 6. But that God can in an instant exert his Power in any, or all Places, whenever he pleases,

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ses, (as the Soul can on a sudden move the extreamest Joynt of the Body) is, I think, an evident Consequence of his Omnipotence ; and that manner of Existence whereby he is able to do this, I call Omnipresence ; and this is all that I am able to conceive when I say that *God is every where present.*

11. That *God is most wise*, that is to say, most perfectly knows what is always fittest and best to be done , and which is the properest way to bring what he pleases to pass, is an evident Consequence from his Omniscience, or rather indeed a Branch of it.

12. From God's Wisdom it necessarily follows, that his
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Counsel is unchangeable. For he who alters or repents of any thing, which he has once positively determined, plainly shews his Foresight to be imperfect, and his Wisdom defective. When therefore we meet with some Passages in Scripture which seem to suggest that God has decreed one thing, and yet afterwards done another; we must of necessity understand such Decrees to have been not absolute, but merely conditional (a Condition being in many Cases implied, and supposed, where it is not in Words expressed.) And when he is said to have repented of some things which he has done, or to have been grieved thereat, we must
needs

needs interpret such Places in a metaphorical Sense, with an Allusion to those Motions and Passions in Mankind ; just as *Hands, Arms, Eyes, &c.* are on the same account sometimes ascribed unto him, tho really he has no such Members, no more than he has the Passions, which belong to Men.

13. I do most evidently find in my self a Power to choose at all times what I please, and to determine my own Actions as I will my self: And this I look upon to be a greater Perfection in me, than if I were absolutely necessitated and determined by somewhat without my self, in every thing which I should do.

Since

Part II. Religion. 17

Since therefore I derive this Perfection originally from God, who is the Contriver and Author of my Being, (Part I. §. 7.) I cannot but ascribe the same in the highest Degree to him, who must be the Fountain of all Perfection. And therefore I most readily believe that *God is a free Agent*; and worketh all things after the Counsel of his own Will.

14. How Justice, in a strict Sense, is to be ascribed unto God, who owes nothing to any one, and has a supreme and most absolute Dominion over all things, as having made them purely at the Motion of his own Will, I look upon to be a nice and useless Dis-

Disquisition: But the common Rules of Justice, which Men are obliged to observe one to another, to me do appear to be so very reasonable, that I cannot apprehend why any one, of Knowledge and Understanding, should ever vary from them, except thereby he might propose either to advance his Interest, compass his Pleasure, or wreck his Malice; neither of which I can imagine to have any Place in God. I therefore conclude that *God is Just*, even according to the common Rules of Justice and Equity, as far as they can be applied to him.

15. Veracity to me appears to be no less agreeable to Reason
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son than Justice, if it be not rather a Part of it : And since I am able to imagin no Shadow of a Reason why God should declare any thing which were false ; I cannot but believe that *he is most true* in all that he says.

16. That God should hate those Creatures which he has made (except they by their evil Actions and Disobedience do deserve it) is not to be conceived : And as he who loves another is always ready to pardon his Faults (especially if they have any way proceeded only from Frailty and Infirmary) upon his true and sincere Repentance ; so if the Person beloved continues obstinate and incorrigible in his
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Transgressions, he, with all the Reason that can be, forfeits that Love which he once enjoyed, and justly incurs such Penalty as may be suitable unto the Obligations which he has broken, and the Quality of the Person he has offended. I therefore conclude, That *God has originally a Love for all Mankind, and that he will be always merciful unto such Sinners as are truly penitent; but strict and severe in the Punishment of those who go on in the Breach of his Laws without Repentance.*

17. *Nor are those Calamities which so often follow us in this Life, or God's visiting the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children (which can be understood only*

ly of temporal Afflictions) or his punishing the wicked with extreme and everlasting Misery, any manner of Derogation, either to his Justice, or his Love and Mercy towards Mankind, since temporal Afflictions may well be looked on as the Effects of his Love, as being designed to wean and purge us from the Love and Filth of this World, and to make us more fit for Heaven ; and Eternal Damnation (of which we have fair warning given us, and may therefore avoid it if we please) is as little as can be threatened (and often is but too little) to keep us back from all manner of Sin and Wickedness.

18. That some sort of Actions are eternally and essentially good, that is to say, to be approved of by every impartial rational Being (e. g. to love him from whom we derive our Existence, to perform our Promise, and such like) and that the contrary Actions hereunto are therefore essentially and eternally evil, is to me from hence sufficiently evinced, because that if all Beings, which are endowed with Reason and Understanding, should universally set themselves to do those things which now are accounted evil, and to omit those things which now are esteemed good; the Consequence of this must necessarily be universal

versal Confusion and Misery. Now that God loves and approves of all Actions that are good, does evidently appear, because such Actions do tend to the general Happiness of his Creatures, whom he loves, §. 16. and for the contrary Reason it will follow, that he hates and abhors all Actions that are evil. And this is what I mean when I say, *That God is most holy.*

19. All possible Excellency or Perfection that I can conceive, is reducible unto these Five Heads, *viz.* 1. Perfection of Being, which consists in perpetual Duration, without any Decay or Infirmary. 2. Perfection of Understanding, which consists in such Know-

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Knowledg and Wisdom as is free from all Mistake or Ignorance. 3. Perfection of the Will, which consists in a free Liberty to choose or refuse, without any Constraint or fatal Necessity. 4. Perfection of Power, which consists in an Ability to do every thing. And 5. Moral Perfection, which consists in an inflexible Resolution always to do and encourage that which is morally good, and to avoid and discourage whatsoever is morally evil. Now, since all these Perfections are in God in the most absolute manner; as I think I have shewn in the foregoing Paragraphs, from hence it will follow, That *God is most absolutely perfect.*

20. And

20. And since he who is absolutely perfect can stand in need of nothing ; it must also follow, that *God is most perfectly happy in Himself.*

21. As my Reason do's evidently demonstrate unto me the Being of a God, so does it not in the least suggest to me any Argument to conclude that *there is any more but One God*: And it is absurd and unreasonable to multiply Beings without any Ground or Reason for it.

22. That there is a real, and not only a nominal Distinction, between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost or Spirit ; that they are frequently spoken of in the Holy Scriptures in such Terms as

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we ordinarily use when we speak of Three Persons (altho sometimes this Expression, Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit, may be put to signifie not so much the Person, as the Power, Effect or Energy of God's Spirit) That, altho the Son be often spoken of as really and truly a Man, yet many things are said of him which cannot agree to a meer Man, or to any created Being whatsoever; and that there are such things also spoken of the Holy Ghost, as cannot be accommodated unto a Creature: Moreover, that the Son derives his Being from, and always depends upon the Father, as the Holy Ghost does from, and upon the Father
and

and the Son: All these things, I say, in my Opinion, are not to be denyed by any one, who will but interpret the Holy Scriptures according to the ordinary Sense and Signification of the Words thereof, and not according to his own Prejudices or preconceived Opinions. And altho the *Socinians* do clearly enough expound some of those Texts of Scripture, which, with more Zeal than Reason, are sometimes urged against them; yet, as to the principal Passages, which are alleged to prove what I have now asserted, I think their Interpretation of them not only to be harsh and strained (which in a manner is acknowledged even by their

own acute and brief Historian, in the last Paragraph of his second Letter) but also, many times, to be utterly irreconcilable unto the Words and Context. And now (to explain those Conceptions which arise in my Mind upon the Consideration of the Texts here hinted at, as well as, in a Matter so abstruse and remote from my Senses, I am able) since I cannot find a more proper Term to express the Distinction of *the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* by, *I call them Three Persons ; and*, not knowing what other Title to give a Divine Person who is no Creature, *I call each Person God : But I give the Title of God in a more emphatical manner unto the*

the Father than unto the Son or Holy Ghost, because the Father depends on none, but they do depend on him : *And*, since both my Reason and the Holy Scriptures do teach me to own no more than one God, I am of necessity compelled to say that *these Three are so united together* (tho in such a manner as is above my Understanding) *as to be but one God*. And altho it argues a great deal of Imperfection in Humane Speech, that, for want of other fit and proper Terms, we are forced to give the same Appellation to each Person singly, and to the Three conjointly ; yet this does not imply any manner of Contradiction, as some do object ;

because, when we apply the Word *God* to one single Person, it has not the same *exact* and *adequate* Signification, as when we ascribe it unto the Three Persons conjointly (for that would imply that each single Person were, at the same time, the Three Persons ; and so confound that Distinction which the Holy Scriptures do so often and apparently make between them.) And this analogical Difference, in the Signification of the Word *God*, will easily solve most of those Objections which the *Socinians* do bring against the Doctrin of the Trinity. And because I know no better Word to express that Unity which I apprehend to be

be between the *Three Persons*; I therefore say, that they are *One in Essence* or Substance. For Unity of Concord or Consent alone, does not seem enough to me to denominate them to be One God. And because I find that *the Son is said to be begotten, and the Holy Ghost to proceed, or be sent, or emitted*; I therefore make use of these Terms, without pretending to assign the Difference between Generation and Procession: And altho *the Son and the Holy Ghost*, being each of them God, are, and must needs be, *of the same Nature, and, upon that account, equal with the Father*; yet it is manifest that this Equality must be understood

with an Allowance for the absolute Independence of the Father, and the Dependence of the Son and Holy Ghost upon him.

23. All the Objections that I can remember to be made against the Doctrin of the Trinity thus stated, I think, are easie enough to be solved by what I have now said, excepting Two, which must be particularly answered. The first is taken from *Job. 10. 33.* &c. But tho our Saviour did not here assert his Divinity when there seemed to be occasion for it, yet it will not follow, that therefore he is not God : Especially if we consider, that it was not always his Custom to give full and
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compleat Answers unto such captious Questions and Objections as were put to him: But sometimes he contented himself only with shewing the Unreasonableness of those who proposed them ; of which we have one Instance, *Mat.* 21. 23. &c. and another *Joh.* 8. 3. &c. and, as some think, another, *Mat.* 22. 17. &c. And we may as well conclude, that he had no Authority for what he did, because he did not declare it when the Chief Priests and Elders questioned it, *Mat.* 21. 23. as deny his Divinity, because he did not expressly maintain it, when on that account he was charged with Blasphemy. The other Ob-

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jection is drawn from *Mar. 13. 32.* But to it I answer, That our Saviour's Design, in that Place, being only to represent the Day there spoken of as a Secret not to be made known unto Men until it should come upon them ; that they might always stand upon their Guard, watch, and prepare for it : Let but the Word *know* be taken to signifie to *make known* (which fully answers the Design of the Place, and, as it is evident, *St. Paul* uses the same Word, *1 Cor. 2. 2. I determined, says he, not to know, that is, not to make known or teach, any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified :* and then the most natural Paraphrase of
of

of that Place will be this, *But that Day and Hour there is no one who shall or can make known unto you; no not the Angels which are in Heaven; (who may be supposed to be ignorant of it themselves) nor even the Son himself (who altho he knoweth all things, Joh. 21. 17. yet can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do, Joh. 5. 19. And who speaketh not of himself, but the Father which sent him gave him Commandment what he should say, Joh. 12. 49.) But the Father only shall in his own time, make it known by bringing it to pass. And this Exposition of this Place of Scripture (which is the only Text that seems to press very hard upon us in this Controversy)*

verſy) I am ſure, is much more eaſie and natural, than *many* of thoſe Interpretations, which the *Socinians* do advance, of the principal Paſſages which we urge againſt them. But if any one ſhall tell me, that this whole Matter concerning the Trinity, is very obſcure and difficult to be apprehended; and therefore, that it is unreaſonable to require the explicit Belief of ſuch Doctrin, as neceſſary, either to Salvation or Church-communion: As to the Obſcurity, it is not to be expected that it ſhould be otherwiſe, ſince, in this Life, we know but *in part*, and prophesie *in part*, and ſee but *through a Glaſs darkly*, or *in a Riddle*, as the

the Margin has it Word for Word from the Original, 1 Cor. 13. 9, 12. As to Church-communion, I shall speak of it hereafter in its proper Place: And as touching Salvation, I refer my Reader to what I have said, §. 3. and Part 1. §. 14. and §. 26.

24. Either the Matter of this visible World did from all Eternity coexist together with God, or else it was produced from Nothing by him, there being no Third Way to be assigned: Now both these Ways being above, tho neither of them contrary to my Reason; my Reason alone can never solidly determine which of them is the right. But the later of these making
most,

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most, in my Opinion, for the Honour of God (of whom, as being the most perfect Being, I think I ought to entertain the most glorious Thoughts that possibly I can ;) and the Holy Scriptures so often ascribing Eternity without Beginning unto God, in an emphatical manner, as his alone peculiar Attribute, I am thereby brought to believe, that *the Matter of this World* is not eternal, but *was at first created by God from Nothing* ; and consequently, that *God can again annihilate it, or any Part of it, if it should so please him.*

25. That God did contrive, frame and fashion this World, and every part of it, and also that he still preserves and governs

verns it by his Providence, I have formerly concluded, Part 1. § 7. and §. 10. And tho every ignorant Person is not able to dive into, and fathom the Counfels of a great and Sovereign Prince ; yet this is no Argument that he does not manage and rule his Dominions with due Care and Wisdom : Nor could the making, nor can the Government of the World be any manner of Trouble to God (as the *Epicureans* objected) since he is absolutely Omnipotent, and needs no more but to speak the Word and the thing is done.

26. It is very evident that the Heathen World its self was generally and strongly addicted

dicted to the Belief of certain Beings (some good and some evil) superiour in Nature to Man, but subject to, and Ministers of the Will and Pleasure of the supreme God. But the Holy Scriptures do give us a more full and perfect Account of this Matter, *viz.* that God created certain *Spiritual Beings, called Angels*; that is to say, Messengers, as being sent forth by him to execute his Will upon all Occasions that he thinks fit; and particularly to minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation (not that God has any need of their Assistance or Ministry, any more than he has of the Worship and Service of Man; but only thought fit to
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create them of his own good Will and Pleasure ; and probably that they, as well as Man, might be Objects for him to exercise his Goodness and Beneficence upon.) But whether every particular Person, State and Kingdom have their proper Guardian Angels, appointed them by God, is not, as I can find, upon any sure Grounds to be determined. *But* we are farther informed, that *of these Angels some sinned, and therefore kept not their first Estate*, but were cast down into Hell, and delivered into Chains of Darkness, to be reserved unto Judgment; *the Chief, or Prince of whom is called the Devil*, the great Dragon, the old Serpent and Satan,

tan, *and is*, together with his Angels, *permitted by God to range to and fro in the Earth, to tempt even the Godly, but to prevail and work in the Children of Disobedience.*

27. That an eternal Succession of Men, or any other Beings, without a Beginning, is absolutely impossible, I have, I think with Reason, already said, Part I. §. 6. That Man at first was not fashioned by any blind and undesigned Chance, is to me very evident, as well from the wonderful Frame of his Mind, as from the great Variety, Regularity and Usefulness of all the Parts of his Body, and particularly his Organs of Sensation : And that
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he did not at first spring up out of the Earth by any Force of Nature, distinct from the Power of God, I think needs no Proof, because the contrary Supposition is not only without any Ground of Evidence, but also liable to so many monstrous Improbabilities as do render it highly extravagant to imagine. I therefore must conclude, That (at the least) *the first Male and Female of Mankind were immediately framed and fashioned by God: and that all the rest of them were and are derived from those two by the way of natural Generation* (Christ Jesus excepted, who tho born of a Woman, was not begotten of a Man) is the plain Voice of the Holy Scripture.

28. That

28. That Man, tho made a little lower than the Angels, is yet by Nature far more excellent than any other living Creature, is sufficiently apparent. The Holy Scripture tells us, that God made Man after his own Image : But this Expression cannot be understood with respect to the Shape and Structure of the Human Body (God being both incorporeal and invisible) but is, as I apprehend it, to be interpreted altogether with relation to those Faculties which are implanted in the Mind of Man, and that internal Uprightness in which he was at first created ; which do carry in them an evident Similitude and Analogy unto some of those

those Attributes and Perfections which are in God himself. That *the Body of Man is made originally of the Earth*, by which it is nourished, and into which it is again resolved, is obvious to be collected from Reason : *And if I had never been told that God breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life, whereby he became a Living Soul*, yet those Powers and Faculties which I find in my self, of Thinking, Judging, Drawing Consequences (and those sometimes in a very long Train) reflecting back upon my own Thoughts, and determining my own Actions as I please, together with that inward Satisfaction which I reap from doing what is morally

rally good, tho naturally and to my Body painful and uneasy ; and the Trouble which I find upon the doing of any thing which is morally evil, tho otherwise never so pleasant and delightful, would, I think, have sufficiently taught and assured me, that there is a Principle within me, which, tho united to my Body (and thereby affected with its Delights or Pains) yet is really distinct from it, and of a different Nature and more noble Original, which I call my Soul.

29. That God , who has originally a Love for all Mankind, *ſ. 16*, should have created any Man with an Intent to make him eternally and
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unavoidably miserable, is to me a Contradiction : And since, on the contrary, he has naturally implanted in every Man a vehement and unextinguishable Desire of being Happy, and of always remaining so, I cannot but conclude, that *God intended Man at his first Creation unto eternal Happiness.* For that he should implant the Seed and Principle of such a Desire in us all, which never fails to spring forth and shew its self in every Man who comes to Years of Knowledge ; and this to be only a Torment to us, without any Possibility either of suppressing or satisfying it ; is, I think, not to be conceived, except we should suppose that
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at the first he made us to be Objects, not of his Love, but Hatred.

30. As even by the Ruins of a noble Structure we may be able to give a Guess how goodly the Building was at its first Erection; so when I at present consider how distorted the Nature of Man is (his Lusts and Passions always struggling with, and often getting the Victory over his Reason, which evidently was designed for the superiour Faculty) own my Understanding alone methinks suggests to me, that *Man was at first created in a more perfect and upright State and Condition than what he is in at present: But how our Nature was so far perverted, as*
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that all our Reason and Endeavours cannot again reduce it to that firm and perfect Regularity, in which we are sensible it ought to be, and therefore have cause to believe that it was at first framed by God, is what of our selves we never could have collected from any Suggestions of our own Understanding.

31. Whether the second and third Chapters of the Book of *Genesis* are all to be understood literally, or whether an allegorical Interpretation is in some parts to be admitted, I think my self not much concerned to debate. But, which way soever we take, the plain Result will be, that whereas God placed our
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first Parents, at their Creation, in a state both of Innocency and Happiness; they by transgressing his Law, and thereby incurring his Displeasure, fell both from the one and the other. Now that they, by their sin, might deprave their own Natures, and vitiate their Constitutions, is no way irrational to suppose: And that from the depraved Nature and vitiated Constitution of Parents divers inconveniences may be entailed upon their Posterity (who do derive not only their bodily Temper and Complection, but frequently also their Passions and Inclinations from those of their Parents) is what common Experience does daily

ly testify. When therefore *the Holy Scripture assigns the sin of our first Parents, as the Cause of the Corruption of the Nature of Mankind,* I see nothing therein which is not very reasonably to be allowed.

32. He who grants a Favour to another, barely and only of his own free will and pleasure, may without any violation of Justice, whenever he pleases, withdraw that, which he is under no Obligation to continue any longer than he thinks fit. Nor is it any way to be reckoned as unmerciful or cruel, to cease the continuance of a purely voluntary kindness, if the stopping of it does not render the Person actually miserable with-

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out any fault committed by him. If therefore God had thought fit, even for no other reason but his own Pleasure, to divert the stream of his kindness from Man ; and that altho he had continued in a State of Innocency, provided he had not put him into a state of unavoidable Misery ; who could have any just reason to complain, or find fault with him for doing what he should please with his own ? Much more then will it follow that, If upon the occasion of our first Parents Transgression, and the Corruption of our Nature which thereupon ensued, God had resolved to cut us all forever off from the inheritance of those Blessings to which
Man

Man was designed at his first creation, but now rendered naturally unfit for, by this original pollution; even in this there had been nothing contrary to the strict Rules of Justice or Mercy: Especially if we consider, that all the World have ever thought it reasonable that, in some cases, Children should, on account of their Parents Faults, lose some benefits and advantages which otherwise they would have enjoyed. But actually to inflict a positive Punishment upon any one for a Fault which he never committed, nor any way voluntarily concurred to, nor was at all capable of hindering in him who committed it, being so directly contrary,

not only unto Mercy, but also to the common Rules of Justice ; I can not but conclude, that *tho' the original Corruption of our Nature may be reckoned as a just occasion why God might, if he had pleased, have excluded us all for ever from the Joys of Heaven ; Yet that alone is not to be assigned as a Cause why he will doom any Man to the Torments of Hell*, who does not otherwise deserve it, by his own actual sins and Transgressions.

33. That by the Corruption of our Nature we are all of us mightily inclined to things that are evil and immoral, is most evident from our constant Experience : But that we have not thereby lost all knowledge

knowledge and power of doing that which is good, I think is no less apparent from the Writings and Examples of so many brave Heathens; Who having no other Divine Law but that which was written in their Hearts by the Suggestions of their natural Understanding, yet both taught and did so many of the things contained in the written Law of God. But curiously to distinguish and assign the Bounds between Nature and Grace (which are both the Gifts of God; the one in an ordinary, the other in an extraordinary way) and to pretend to shew how far we may go by the bare strength of Nature, and where it is that we just stand

in need of supernatural Assistance, I look upon to be a work of very little use or benefit; but of extraordinary difficulty, and perhaps impossible for any, but God himself, to perform. Moreover, how God will deal with those who have no other Guide to follow but the Light of Nature; How far he will punish their Sins, be merciful to their Ignorance or Infirmities, or reward their endeavours to do good, is a Secret of which we are no way able to give any particular account. But it may suffice us to know, that the Generation of *Mankind by reason of the Corruption of their Nature being apparently in a worse condition in respect of eternal*

nal Salvation, than what they otherwise would have been; God was pleased to determine that he would not deal with them according to that absolute Sovereignty which he had over them, nor according to the strict and rigorous Rules of Justice, which might have justified the greatest Severities; but according to the inclinations of his Mercy and Loving kindness. Of which way of Gods proceeding with us, I come now to give an account.

34. That God might, if he had pleased, without the violation of any of his Attributes, have freely forgiven all the Sins of Mankind, and even restored our Nature again to its primitive Integrity and Up-
D 5 rightness,

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rightness, seems naturally to follow both from the Absoluteness of his Authority, and the Almightyness of his Power: And even the strictest Justice, tho it fully allows, yet does not compel any one to exact a Debt where he is the only Creditour, or a Punishment where he is the only party injured or offended. But if *God has thought fit to deal after another manner with us; and rather offers to help our Infirmities, as occasion requires, than wholly to repair our perverted Nature; and chooseth to have an Expiation made for our Sins, rather than to remit them without any such consideration;* Altho his Will and Pleasure is enough to silence all our Exceptions,

tions, and justifie his proceedings; yet may there some probable Considerations be urged in order to make us clearly apprehend the Wisdom of God in the fitness and reasonableness of this his Dispensation: As namely, that hereby we are, or ought to be made more continually sensible of our constant Dependence upon him, of his great Mercy and Compassion for us, of his perfect Hatred and Abhorrence of sin.

35. It cannot, I think, be doubted but that, at the very time of the Fall of man, God, who is infinitely wise and knowing, and therefore stands in need of no time to deliberate, had fully determined what he would

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would do in order to the Expiation of our Sins, and the helping of our corrupted Nature, so as that we might be again in some capacity of recovering that Happiness to which we were at first designed, §.29. And that this work of *our Redemption was to be performed by the Means and Mediation of an extraordinary Person*, who was to be sent into the World, under the Title of the Messiah, or the *Christ*, is abundantly evident, both from the Old and New Testament; especially if we compare them and expound them one by another. But it is certain, that Christ did not immediately come into the World; nor was there any one for some Thousands of
Years

Years after the Fall, who so much as pretended to that Title or Office; Whether it were, that God thought it fit by some previous Dispensations to prepare the Minds of Men for the reception of so extraordinary a Person, or for what other reason, I pretend not to determine; but think my self obliged intirely to submit to the Wisdom of God, who thought fit so to order it, that the Messiah should not appear until that fulness of time which he had appointed for it. In the mean while, altho the great Light was not yet to come into the World, yet God suffered it not to be wholly overspread with Darkness; But besides the Light of the
visible

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visible Creation, which declares the Glory and eternal Power of God ; and besides the natural Light which arises in every Mans Understanding, whereby they who have no other Law, are a Law unto themselves, unto which their own Conscience is a Witness beyond exception ; God was pleased in a supernatural way to reveal himself unto divers persons (to the intent that they might teach the Knowledge of him to others) as to *Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Job*, and probably to many more than we read of (Amongst whom, why *Balam* should not be reckoned, I can see no reason ; altho Covetousness and the hopes of worldly Advancement

vancement tempted him to make but an ill use of the good Gifts of God) And also to chuse out unto himself a peculiar People, namely that of *Israel*, and to vouchsafe unto them a more than ordinary knowledge of Himself and his Laws, by his Servants *Moses* and the Prophets: And lastly by his Providence to order the matter so, that the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets should many years before Christs coming, be translated into the Greek tongue (which was then the most universal Language) that by them all Nations might have the more Instruction, and so be the better prepared to receive the Messiah, whenever he should be

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be made known unto them. And for this reason also it seems to be, that God so long before the Mosaick Law, ordained and appointed the Sacrificing of Beasts ; whereby it became the common practice of the Gentiles, as well as Jews : Not that he had any esteem or value for the Blood of Bulls or of Goats ; but only that by this practice the Minds of Men might be the more easily and readily disposed to own and rely upon that great Sacrifice, which Christ was one day to make of Himself for them.

36. There are several Prophecies dispersed up and down through the Old Testament, plainly designed to foretel the coming

coming of the Christ or Messiah, what sort of person he should be, and what he should do and suffer: As that he should be the Seed of the Woman, of the Progeny of *Abraham*, of the Family and Lineage of *David*, born in *Bethlehem*, and born of a Virgin: That he should come into the World about the time that the Scepter and the Law-giver, that is to say, the force and power of civil Authority, should cease from the Tribe of *Judah*, and should finish his Work in the compass of the last seven Years of those Four hundred and ninety, which are pointed out by the Prophet *Daniel*; That by many he should be despised and rejected

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ed, should be a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Griefs, be oppressed and afflicted, yet bear it most patiently, and at last be wounded and cut off, not for himself, but for our Transgressions. And yet for all this he is foretold to be a person wonderful, a Counsellour, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace, of the increase of whose Government there should be no end, and unto whom the gathering of the Nations should be. Now altho there may some Difficulties be started as to the Interpretation of some of those and such like Prophecies, which do occur in the Old Testament (which is no great wonder, considering
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how the Jews, who are enemies to Christianity, have endeavoured to obscure and perplex them.) yet if we do consider that there is evidently a fair, consonant and reasonable Application of all these Predictions to be made unto Jesus of *Nazareth*, and that there is not, nor ever was any other person to whom they could be applied, besides himself; and since it is not possible for any one, but God, to foretell a thing with so many circumstances so long before it comes to pass, I think I may very well from hence conclude, not only against the Jews, who acknowledge, but also against all others, who may perhaps at first deny the Authority of
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the Old Testament, that *Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ* or Messiah, whom God had promised to send into the World: And if to this we add the greatness of his Miracles, and the transcendent Goodness of his Doctrine (of which see Part 1. §. 19) I think the Argument will have the force of a Demonstration.

37. In the Holy Scriptures I find such things spoken of Christ as do plainly shew him to have been a true and real Man ; in all things like unto us, sin only excepted : Other Expressions also I find frequently applyed to him, which cannot possibly agree to any Man, or created Being whatsoever, but only unto God ;

God ; as I have already said
§. 22. And altho there is a
plain Distinction made be-
tween his Divine and Humane
Nature , yet is he always
spoken of but as one person.
Here then I know not better
how to express my Sentiments
than by saying, that in the
one and single Person of *Christs*,
there is a Conjunction of both
the Divine and Humane Na-
ture, and consequently that
Christ is really and truly *both*
God and Man. And if the
same Objection be made a-
gainst this Doctrine as is a-
gainst that of the Trinity,
viz. that it is very obscure and
difficult to be apprehended ;
I shall also return the same
Answer, as I have already
done

done to that in the latter end of §. 23. to which I refer my Reader.

38. He who acknowledges Christ to be God, to be sure will allow of his eternal Existence, as to his Divine Nature; And, as to what concerns his Humane Nature; that *he was Conceived by the Power of the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary*; and that, after some years spent in preaching and doing good, he was, thro the Malice of the Jews, and at their vehement desire, condemned by *Pilate* the Roman Governour, to be *crucified*; which was accordingly done, and a Spear thrust into his Side; That being *dead* he was *buried*, and lay in the Sepulcher unto the

the *third day* ; upon which *he rose from the dead*, and after several times conversing with his Disciples for the space of Forty days, that he *was* visibly taken up from them, and *received into Heaven* unto infinite and eternal Glory, *where he is our perpetual Mediatour and Intercessour at the Throne of God* : All this, I say, is so evidently and without Controversy testified by his Disciples (whose Veracity I have asserted, Part 1. §. 19) and recorded in the Scriptures of the New Testament (whose Authority I have proved Part 1. §. 23. &c.) that no reasonable Man, I think, can now deny, or so much as doubt of any part of it : And altho there are one or two passages

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passages of Scripture, from whence it is inferred, that *Christ* before his Resurrection *did descend into Hell*, yet will I not venture, nor do I think it necessary, to determine whether by the word *Hell* is meant the state of the dead only, or the place of the damned; or (if the latter signification be to be chosen) for what end and purpose it was that he descended thither. Only I conclude certainly, that it was not to suffer any thing there; because I do not find the least intimation throughout the Scripture of any suffering of *Christ*, which he did or was to endure, beyond the shedding of his Blood and yielding up his life upon the Cross.

39. What

39. What God might have done (had he so pleased) without any other consideration, but only by virtue of his own absolute Authority; if he has rather chosen to do it for the sake of Jesus Christ, and in consideration of that Obedience which he performed, and those Sufferings which he underwent, who shall dare to find fault with him, or pretend to be wiser than he? Now that *it is for the sake of Christ, and of his Obedience and Sufferings, that God vouchsafes to us the Pardon of our Sins, and makes us the offer of everlasting Happiness,* is so plainly declared in many places of the Holy Scriptures, that nothing can be more. And since I find

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God's sending of Christ to be set forth as an instance of his Love, not to some few particular persons only, but even to the whole World; and since Christ is said to have died for all, and to have been a Propitiation for the sins of the World, without any exception; I cannot but conclude, that all men who ever were, or are, or shall be, might have been, or may be the better for Christ and his Sufferings, if through their own default they have not, or shall not forfeit that Benefit which was designed them. And as it is not disputed, but that the ancient Patriarchs, who by Faith foresaw the coming of Christ, had a share in

in that Redemption which he wrought, altho they died before he came into the World ; so to me it seems to stand with a great deal of reason, that even those persons who never heard any thing of Christ, may yet for his sake find Mercy from God ; because God, who perfectly knows the most secret Inclinations of all Hearts, may clearly foresee, that if the knowledge of Christ had been proposed and offered unto them, they would have owned him, and submitted unto his Gospel ; which our Saviour tells us, was the very case of *Tyre* and *Sidon* ; and for which reason he declares that they should receive a milder Doom than *Chorazin*

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and *Bethsaida* in the day of Judgment, *Mat.* 11. 21, 22. And how far this may extend to all such as labour under very strong Prejudices, altho not strictly invincible, I think that God is the only proper Judge.

40. But however God may think fit to deal with those, who are either ignorant of, or strongly prejudiced against the Christian Religion; yet the manner of his proceeding with true Believers is plainly enough declared. All those who receive and own the Christian Faith are not to be looked upon as so many separate persons; each of them believing such and such Doctrines; but are always represented

presented in Scripture as Joyn-
ed together in one Society or
Body, which is called the
Church, of which Christ Je-
sus is the chief or Head; and
under an obligation to live in
communion and fellowship
one with another, under those
Laws and Constitutions which
Christ has given them; but
not, that I can find in Scrip-
ture, obliged to joyn with,
or submit to, any one person,
as the Vicar of Christ and the
visible Head of the Church
upon Earth. For if Christ had
appointed any such person as
his Deputy upon Earth, he
must either have declared a
matter of such consequence
with great plainness and evi-
dence, or else it would be very

hard to find fault with any man for being mistaken in it: Whereas the Arguments which those of the *Church of Rome* bring to prove, either that such a Vicar there must be, or that *St. Peter* the Apostle was the Man, or that the Pope or Bishop of *Rome* (and not the Bishop of *Antioch*) is the Successour of *St. Peter* both in his Bishoprick and Authority; are all so weak and precarious, so forced and perplexed, and so fully confuted by the Protestant Divines, that nothing in my Opinion but Blindness of Understanding, or worldly Interest can prevail with the Members of that Church, still to insist upon them Now that *Christ* instituted but one Church, in which

which all true Believers and good livers, are for ever to be comprised, is very plain. And altho, through the Mistakes and Perverseness of Man, this Church is rent and divided into opposite, and contending parts, and parties; yet this does not hinder but that according to its true and primitive Constitution, it is, or ought to be one (as a Kingdom or Commonwealth by its Laws and Constitutions is but one Society, altho there may arise Factions and different Interests in it) nor shall any Man be esteemed as a Member of the Church before God, who is not ready and willing, according to the best of his power and knowledge, to maintain

the Unity of it, and that upon those very Terms, and none other, which Christ has appointed, as near as possibly he can find and apprehend them. Moreover, that all the Laws and Constitutions on which Christ has founded the Church, and by which he would have it regulated, are exactly agreeable unto the Rules of sound Morality, and the Will of God, cannot be so much as doubted ; and therefore it is truly said, that *the Church is Holy*, altho every particular Member thereof has both his frailties and his sins; which yet he must repent of, and so become holy as the Church is holy, or else he violates one of the main and funda-

fundamental Laws, and so becomes as it were an Out-law of the Church, and forfeits his part in all the Privileges that belong unto that Society. And whereas, before the coming of Christ, the People of *Israel* did enjoy more of the Favour of God, and had greater privileges and advantages, on the score of their being God's chosen and peculiar People, than any, or all other Nations of the World; The Gospel of Christ, on the contrary, now looks upon all as equally entitled unto God's Favour (and the advantages thereon depending) who take care duly to qualifie themselves for it. So that whereas formerly *the Church* (that is, the chosen

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sen People of God) might have been said to be particular, as being in a manner limited to one Nation or People; now on the contrary, it is *Catholick*, that is to say, universal, as being no way confined to one place or Nation; all People being equally chosen by God in Christ, who will receive and love according to the Gospel.

41. In those several Revelations which God was pleased to make of himself after the Fall of Man, unto *Adam*, to *Abraham*, and to the People of *Israel*, there was still a plain intimation given them, that in the time to come there should an extraordinary Person arise in the World, who
should

should yet more clearly make known the Will of God to Mankind. But when Christ, who was That Person, did accordingly come, and send his Apostles to preach the Gospel over all the Earth; he neither suggested to them, nor they unto the World, that any other Revelation was ever after to be expected; But always gave them to understand, that God had in the Gospel compleated and finished all that declaration which he intended to make of Himself, or his Will, unto Mankind, until the general Judgment and Dissolution of the World. If therefore the Holy Scripture had given me no manner of assurance of the perpetuity of
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the Church; my own Reason would have been enough to make me conclude, that God in his Providence will so order the matter, as that *the Christian Religion*, being the only known and ordinary means of eternal Salvation, *shall never be wholly extinguished* while the World lasts, so as to stand in need of any new Revelation to revive and restore it. But that there shall always be a certain Company of Men, evidently conspicuous to the World, teaching and professing the true Christian Religion, without any Errour or Corruption in Doctrine or Worship, is what I can nowhere find promised or foretold, either by Christ or any
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of his Apostles. On the contrary, there are several passages in the New Testament, which do plainly seem to foretell that, in process of time, most pernicious Doctrines and practices should prevail and take place, even amongst the generality of those who should profess themselves to be Disciples of Christ. And whosoever shall but lightly compare the state of Christianity for several Centuries before the Reformation, with that Draught of it which is left us by Christ and his Apostles in the Holy Scriptures, must, if he be impartial, I think be fully convinced of the truth of those Predictions.

42. Whether or no God has,
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or does at any time communicate or bestow any extraordinary Grace or Assistance upon those, who are no visible Members of the Church, but altogether strangers unto that Revelation which he has made of himself, is a question which the virtuous lives and heroick actions of some brave Heathens make it hard positively to determine in the negative. But that *he will give so much Grace and strength to every one who shall become a Member of Christ's Church*, as that thereby they may (if the fault be not their own) sufficiently qualifie themselves for eternal Happiness, by the performance of those things which he requires on their part to be done,

done, is what I think no man can doubt of, who does but in general consider the Mercy and Love which God designed, even unto all men, but more especially unto the Church, in sending our Saviour Christ Jesus into the world; altho there were not any particular Promises of this nature in the Gospel: And that this *Grace and ability to do good is in Scripture ascribed unto the Ministry and Influence of the Holy Ghost upon the hearts and minds of true Believers*, is plain and generally owned by all Christians. But that this influence of God's Spirit does not work so uncontrollably, but that it may be resisted, and even wholly rejected and lost,

lost, is I think sufficiently obvious, as well from Reason and Experience, as from those passages of the Holy Scripture wherein we are exhorted not to quench the Spirit, but to walk in, and be led by, the Spirit, and the like; which were apparently needless and to no purpose, if the operations of the Holy Spirit upon our Hearts were so strong as that we could not chuse but comply with them. Now *the things which God requires* to be performed *on our part*, in order to life everlasting, are apparent, and can be no more but to believe those Truths which he has made known, which is called *Faith*; and to observe those Precepts which he

he has commanded, which is called *Obedience*. And as I have already shewn that these things are required from no man beyond the measures of possibility, Part 1. §. 14. So does the Scripture most fully assure us, that *God will* in them make a very sufficient allowance for the ignorance and frailty, and even for the perverseness of our Nature; and will not only be merciful unto our Weaknesses and ordinary Failings, but will pardon and *forgive even our greatest and most wilful Sins, upon our true and hearty Repentance, which is a part of our Obedience*: And as for the sin against the Holy Ghost; which is said to be absolutely unpardonable, I do
not

not think it needful to enquire here into the Nature and Consequence of it, but shall refer my Reader to that excellent Sermon of Dr. *Tillotson*, the late Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, upon that subject. But here it is highly necessary that we should all take that Caution, which both Reason and the Holy Scriptures do give us, *viz.* That we should not presume so much upon God's Mercy and Lenity, as from hence to take occasion of going on in our Wickedness: For Kindness thus abused will certainly turn into the highest Wrath, and much increase the Damnation of a Sinner.

43. I am inclined to think, that those Arguments which
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are drawn from the nature of the Humane Soul it self are not by themselves sufficient to prove that it is immortal ; but on the contrary, that the eternal duration of any created Being depends not so much upon its own Nature, as upon the Will of God, who created it. But as Reason alone suggests unto us, that there is a Life to come after this, Part 1. §. 13. And that Man was at first designed by God unto life eternal, (Part 2. §. 29.) so does the Holy Scripture most clearly assure us, that *they who perform what God requires, shall be happy to all Eternity ; and they who do not so, shall be miserable without end.* The reconcilableness of
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which with God's Justice and Mercy I have accounted for ϕ . 17. But wherein this Happiness of the righteous shall consist, we can but very imperfectly tell ; and whether the Punishment of the wicked shall literally be in everlasting Fire , or whether that expression be only made use of Metaphorically, to signifie the greatness of the Torment, I think it not necessary to determine. But both my own Reason and some places of Scripture do seem strongly to suggest, that neither the Reward of good men, nor the Punishment of the evil, shall be equal unto all ; but greater or less according as they have exceeded one another in the Holiness or Wickedness

Wickedness of their Lives.

44. That all Men are mortal, is sufficiently testified by our daily Experience : But that the Souls of Men immediately upon their separation from their Bodies are not in a state of Insensibility ; but are straitway conveyed into a state, either of Joy or Misery, seems very apparent to me from St. *Paul's* desire to be dissolved that he might be with Christ ; from our Saviours Promise unto the Thief upon the Cross ; and from the Story or Parable of the Rich man and *Lazarus* ; as also from some other intimations which the Holy Scripture gives us. But since *there is*, one day, *to be a general Judgment*

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ment of all mankind before the Tribunal of Christ, where every man must receive his Sentence for eternal, either Happiness or Misery (as the Holy Scripture does assure us) It seems not irrational to judge, that neither the righteous nor the wicked do receive their full and final portion until that Judgment be passed upon them. I know not therefore how to condemn those, who anciently took up the Custom of praying for their deceased Friends, who had lived holily and died piously, that they might find favour and acceptance at the general Judgment, and have their portion of Glory augmented; But I can by no means approve of those,
who

who upon such pitiful suggestions have presumed to determine that there is such a place as Purgatory, where the Souls of men are to be purged and suffer a temporary Punishment before their admission into Heaven. And altho I look upon their praying for the dead to be a mistake, rather than a sin, yet their taking of Mony for so doing, and raising such a Revenue upon that Fund, I look upon to be a most ungodly Cheat and Imposition upon the People.

45. Altho I do not apprehend that there is any natural decay in the general frame and structure of this World, yet it is certain, that by the Power

Power of God, who made it, it may, whenever he pleases, be destroyed and dissolved; and the Scripture assures us, that it shall be so *at the time of the general Judgment*; at which time also *there shall be an universal Resurrection of the Bodies of all those who have died*, and a change of those who shall be then alive. But whether all the same individual Particles of each mans Body which have been laid down in the earth, shall be raised and reunited again to their Souls, I look upon to be a needless Enquiry. What St. Paul says upon this Argument, 1 Cor. 15. 35. does abundantly satisfy me; the purport of whose words I take to be this, viz. That God,

God, who being the Author of Nature, has given such a vegetative power to a Grain of Corn, that when it is thrown into the Ground, and there macerated and dissolved, it springs up again, and brings forth a Body suitable and proper to its self; that that same God, I say, both can and will at the last day, from the dead and dissolved Bodies of Men, raise up such Bodies, as shall please himself. And as there is a continual and great change of Particles in the Humane Body, between the Birth and the Grave; so I see not what Absurdity would follow if we should allow also that there is a like change between the Grave and the Resurrection.

46. And thus I have endeavoured to give a brief and plain account of that part of Christianity which is purely or chiefly doctrinal ; which upon the most strict search that I have been able to make, I think is exactly agreeable to the tenour and main design of the Holy Scriptures, and no way contradictory to the Principles of plain and sound Reason. And if in many other Points of Speculation, which by some are adopted into Religion, I am either wholly ignorant, or perhaps doubtful and undetermined, or, it may be, mistaken ; Yet if to the Belief which I have here professed, I do superadd a virtuous and Christian course
of

of life, I hope there is no moderate Christian, who does not in effect make it a part of his Religion to be uncharitable, but will allow that I may be saved. But wherein this virtuous and Christian life consists, and what are the Duties which the Gospel obliges us all to perform (whether they are the Duties of pure Morality, as to love God and our Neighbour; or those of positive institution, as to be Baptized, to receive the Holy Communion &c.) is to be the subject of the Third and last part of this small Work; to which therefore, I now proceed.

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Gentleman's Religion.

PART III.

I. **A**LL the Commands of God, and consequently *all the Duties of a Christian*, are reducible to these Two; *viz. To abstain from that which is evil, and to do that which is good, according to his ability.* Those actions I call good, which either are eternally agreeable unto the nature, circumstances and mutual relations of Persons and Things,

Things, and therefore for ever to be approved of by every impartial rational Being (as I have said Part 2. §. 18.) for which we must appeal to every mans Reason (as we do to his Eyes, without any other Demonstration, to prove that the Sun shines) or else are expressly commanded by God, of his own positive will and pleasure (to whom, as being his Creatures, we all owe an intire Obedience) for which we must have our recourse to the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament only; all the positive Institutions and Ordinances of the Mosaick Law, which were given by God to the People of *Israel*, being abrogated, and the Ob-

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ligation of them annulled by our Saviour Christ; Altho the moral part of it, which contains the Precepts and Rules of eternal good and evil, and wherein the very life and soul of that Law consisted, be not only abetted and confirmed, but also very much improved by him. And such actions as are contrary to good, that is to say, either disagreeable to the nature and circumstances of Things and Persons, or else positively forbidden by God; I call evil. I am indeed of opinion, that in the Holy Scriptures we have not only the positive Commands of God, whereby some things, which otherwise would have been indifferent, are enjoined

or

or forbidden; but also, either in particular, or at least in general, a sufficient account of all those actions which are eternally good or evil, and therefore to be done or avoided by us; And this designed by Almighty God for the direction and instruction of those Men, who have not ability to dive into, and discover those things by the strength of their Reason. And therefore, in order to describe the whole Duty of a Christian, it might be enough for me to collect the Precepts and Prohibitions which God has given us in his Word, and to vouch no other Authority or reason, but his Will for them. But because every mans Duty will probably

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bably make the greater impression upon his mind, when he is satisfied, as to the reasonableness of it, as well as convinced of its obligation; I shall endeavour, as I proceed, first to infer as much of our Duty as I can, from the nature and circumstances of Things and Persons; and then to superadd, where there is occasion, what God has positively ordained and commanded as to any point; And this with the same conciseness that I have observed in my Second Part, neither enlarging upon those Arguments, nor reciting those Texts of Scripture, which I suppose my Reader to be able to call to mind upon the least hint of them,

2. To begin then: Since *God* is the most perfect and excellent Being in Himself; and so loving and beneficent to Us, It follows, that *we ought to love him in the highest degree that possibly we can*; And true and compleat Love, as it is an act of one person exerted towards another, as its object, consists in an unfeigned desire, First, of always doing what may be truly grateful and acceptable to the person beloved; and Secondly, of enjoying and being with him as much as may be. The more ardent and zealous we are in our love to God, the better undoubtedly it is; And we should strive to engage our Affections, as well as our Reason

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son and our Will, unto him from whom we have received all things : But yet this Love is not to be measured, or judged of, by the earnestness of those suddain motions, which sometimes may arise within us, upon the contemplation of God's Excellency and Goodness ; because to be thus *Passionately* affected is not wholly in our Power ; and sometimes least so, when we most earnestly desire it. But the true and certain way of judging whether we love God, or not, is by examining whether we are stedfast in our Resolutions, and accordingly diligent in our Endeavours, constantly to obey him, and keep all his **Commandments** ;
which


which is the only way to please, and consequently to enjoy and for ever be with him : And where the Love of God is thus firmly rooted in the *Will*, and brings forth plenty of Fruit in the life and actions, it is certainly nevertheless acceptable to him, altho it does not so passionately move our Affections as we could wish or desire : And as all the Duties which we owe unto Almighty God, are derived from, and do depend upon that, of loving of him ; or rather indeed are contained in it, so is it very evident, that they are all to be judged of by the same forementioned Rule ; that is to say, not so much by the strength of an inward

ward Impulse upon the Mind (which is a thing not under our Command) as by the steady agreeableness of our Will and Actions, unto all such Principles, as are right and good.

3. Since God is the most excellent and perfect, and consequently the most worthy, of all Beings, that are, or can be ; from hence it will follow, that *we ought to honour him with the greatest Honour that may be.* Now to honour any person is, in other words, inwardly to esteem, and outwardly to shew our Respect to him. Our inward Esteem of God consists in a due Acknowledgment of his Being and Attributes ; and our out-ward

ward Respect to him, is to be shewn, as well by abstaining from all actions which may favour of any Neglect or Irreverence towards him, as by performing all such as may appear to be suitable, both to his own Excellency and our Dependence upon him.

4. Since God is present in all places, and knows all, even the most secret things; and therefore cannot possibly be deceived, or imposed on; *We should, on this consideration, be very watchful and careful, upon all occasions, how we behave our selves in his Presence:* And, methinks, it is a most shameful and deplorable thing, that Men commonly scruple, not to do those things
in



in the sight of God, which they would be afraid, or ashamed it should be known, or even suspected, of them, by Men like themselves.

5. Since God is most true; from hence it will follow, that *we ought to believe whatsoever he says or makes known*, how improbable soever otherwise it might seem to us. But the true estimate of such belief is not to be made by the clearness and strength of our speculative Assent unto those Truths, which he has proposed to our Understanding (for to receive a Truth without any Doubts or Scruples, which sometimes do unaccountably force themselves upon us, even in the clearest cases, is not always in
our

our power) But rather by the constant suitableness of our lives unto the profession of such Doctrines as we receive and own. And he who has but a weak Faith, and yet leads a good life, altho he is not qualified for doubtful Disputations, is nevertheless a true Believer ; because his Belief answers the main end and design of the Gospel ; which I have shewn to be Virtue and Morality, Part 1. §. 42. Nor can there (for example) be a better Evidence, that a man does really and sufficiently Believe the Truth of a life to come, than when he is industrious and diligent in preparing for it ; whatever Doubts or Scruples he may have, in
point

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point of Speculation, about
it.

6. Since God's Power is infinite, and his Authority uncontrollable; it follows, that *we ought to fear him* (and so much the more, because of our natural propensity to sin) because he has it always in his Power to make us miserable here, and eternally so hereafter. But he cannot be said to fear God most (that is, most truly) who is possessed with the greatest dread and terrour at the thoughts of his Wrath or Judgments; for then the Devils, who tremble, or wicked Wretches, who despair of God's Mercy, would be the best performers of this Duty: But he is the truest Fearer of
God,

God, who always takes the greatest care not to offend him; the Fear of him being never originally designed to torment and disquiet our Minds, but only to be such a Check upon us, as to keep us in due Awe and Obedience.

7. Since every sin is an Offence, both against a gracious and a powerful God, and of every dangerous consequence to the person who commits it; And since nothing can possibly be concealed from God, it follows, that *we ought to be deeply concerned, and truly sorrowful for every sin which we commit, and by no means to palliate or frame Excuses for them, but freely to own and confess them to him.* But the truth

truth of this Sorrow is not to be measured by the Passionateness of it, or the Tears which it produces (which, tho sometimes good signs, yet, too often produce but little effect) but by the hearty reformation of life that follows: And he only can be said, to any purpose, either to be sorry for his sins, or to confess them to God; who is careful for the time to come to forsake them.

8. Since God is Almighty, he is certainly able; and since he loves us, he cannot but be willing, to do every thing that is best and fittest for us, if we, by our own faults, do not provoke him to the contrary: From whence it follows,

lows, that, as long as we serve him faithfully, *we ought, in all our wants and exigencies, to trust and rely upon him.* And if he does not relieve or help us in such a manner as we desire; *we ought to bear whatever Afflictions we lie under, patiently and contentedly;* as well knowing, that God takes no delight in grieving us; but only corrects and keeps us under, in order to our eternal good. And to demonstrate our Trust in God, and submission to his chastising hand; we must never attempt, by any unlawful means, to supply any of our Wants, or free our selves from any, even the most grievous pressures: Altho, at the same time, honest labour

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labour and industry (yet
still with submission to God's
Will) for the compassing of
any thing which is lawful
and good, is not only allow-
ed, but commended and re-
quired.

9. But since God is a free
Agent, and since all the good
which we have, or are capable
of, comes from him, and de-
pends altogether on his Power
and over-ruling Providence;
*we ought to pray to him for
whatsoever we stand in need of;*
and that he would bless all our
honest Labours with success.
But because, often, if we had
the very things which we de-
sire, they would, at the last,
tend to our hurt ; and because
he knows what is fit for us,
much

much better than we our selves; therefore *we ought always to pray, that his Will should ever take place rather than our own.* And since we can have no reason to doubt of his Love, we ought to assure our selves, that we shall receive either the very things we pray for, or else that which is altogether as good for us, if our sins obstruct it not.

10. And the very same considerations, which prompt us to make our Prayers to God in all our wants, do sufficiently demonstrate, that *we ought to return Thanks unto him for all the Blessings which we have received:* Amongst which those Afflictions which have at any time reclaimed us from sin,
and

and brought us to a sense of our Duty, ought, I think, to be placed in the chiefest rank: And the only Demonstration of a truly thankful Heart to God, is the making a pious and honest use, to his Glory, of all those Blessings which we daily receive from him: Nor can there be any thing more absurd, than for a man to pretend to give God Thanks with his Lips, who does not also do it, more to the purpose, in his Life.

11. As God's Justice and Veracity are a reason beyond exception, why *we should without Anxiety depend on all his Promises*; so the great Promise which he has made us, being that of everlasting Happiness;

pinels ; for our more effectual attaining unto which, he has sent his Son our Saviour Christ Jesus to suffer for us ; *It is therefore accordingly our Duty to hope for eternal Salvation* ; that is to say, to expect the performance of what God has promised, and the enjoyment of what Christ has purchased for us. But this hope is to be shewn not by the strength of our Confidence that we shall be saved (in which it is very possible that a man may deceive himself) but by our constant care in duly performing what God requires, on our parts, in order to Salvation : For he only who is diligent in doing the work, does, with any reason,

son, expect, or hope for the promised Reward.

12. *As we are obliged to pray unto God for all that we want, and to hope for eternal Salvation from him; so the Holy Scripture directs us, to ground all our hopes of Happiness upon the Sufferings of Jesus Christ, and to offer up all our Prayers in his Name, as hoping only for his sake to be accepted, who is represented as our only Mediatour and Intercessour with God. Whosoever therefore offers to joyn the Merits, Mediation or Intercession of any Saint, together with Christ Jesus, either to strengthen his hopes of Salvation, or to make his Devotions more surely to be accepted by God;*
as

as he seems to distrust the Mediation of Christ, as if, alone, it were imperfect and insufficient; so he acts not only without any Warrant from, but even contrary to the plain Tenour of the Holy Scriptures.

13. That it is absurd to attempt, and impossible to make, any bodily or visible Picture or Image to represent God, who is both incorporeal and invisible, is most evident beyond doubt or denial: And when any such Representations are made with that design, and exposed to the view of the People, the natural consequence of them, must needs be to beget wrong Notions of God in the Minds at least of

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the

the more ignorant sort: For such as any thing is represented to them, such they will be apt to conceive it in all points to be. My Reason therefore alone would sufficiently conclude, that *it is unlawful to make any sort of Picture or Image to represent God*, altho he had not so positively forbid it in the Holy Scripture; nor so expressly declared himself a jealous God in that particular.

14. In all Cases where one man may deceive another to his great damage; it is reasonable that he, who apprehends such danger, should not depend upon another man, except he first has good security given him of his Truth and Fidelity.

Fidelity. Now many times the best, or indeed the only, security which can be given in such cases, is a solemn Appeal to Almighty God (who is the Searcher of all Hearts, and the Punisher of all Wickedness) as expecting and freely offering one's self to his Wrath and Vengeance, in case he prevaricates in what he asserts or promises: And this is what we call by the Name of an Oath. And since he who takes an Oath (I mean with due seriousness and consideration) does therein make an evident acknowledgment of some of the principal Attributes of God; *viz.* his Omniscience, Justice, Truth, and Power; it follows that an

G 2 Oath,

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Oath, duly taken, is an act of Honour and Reverence towards God ; and consequently, *is not*, in its self, *unlawful or evil* : But if an Oath be taken *rashly, or unadvisedly, or unnecessarily, or in trivial cases*; it is a lessening and undervaluing of the Divine Majesty (which ought always to be treated with the profoundest Reverence) and, consequently, *sinful* and unlawful. And this is all that I can conceive to be forbidden by our Blessed Saviour, *Mat. 5. 34*. Nor can I apprehend that, that place contains an universal prohibition of all swearing whatsoever : For, besides that the very Context in the preceding Verse does most evidently

limit

limit the discourse to such Oaths as are purely voluntary, and therefore altogether unnecessary; There is neither Reason nor Precedent to induce any one to believe that our Saviour would universally forbid any thing which has nothing of Evil or Malignity in its nature: And some even of the best of Men, not only before, but since the coming of Christ, and even the Blessed Angels themselves, we are assured in Scripture, have sworn upon some occasions with great solemnity. Nor do the Holy Scriptures, in other places, where mention is made of the taking of an Oath, speak of it as a thing unlawful, or forbidden, or any way

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universally evil in its self, but altogether the contrary : Nor did our Blessed Saviour, that we can find, design to deprive Princes or Magistrates of any part of that lawful Power which they had over their Subjects before his coming; who, every where, were invested with a Right of exacting an Oath from Them, when it should be necessary, either for the peace and security of the Commonwealth, or for the ending of Differences between private parties. And as for that passage of *St. James* 5. 12. which is by some urged against swearing in any case whatsoever; It, being no more but a recapitulation of our Saviours words

words which were just now mentioned, needs no other Answer than what I have already given. But since the very nature and design of an Oath is to invoke God, that thereby a Man may give assurance to another of his truth and fidelity ; it follows, that *to affirm any thing upon Oath, beyond what the Man, who swears, knows to be true ; or not to perform what he has upon his Oath promised, is a sin.* And since he who imposes upon another by doubtful and equivocal words, does as much deceive him, as he who speaks a down-right Falsity ; from hence it will follow, that *such a deceitful Oath is altogether as contrary to the*

nature and design of an Oath, and consequently as *unlawful* as a false one. But altho an Oath lays an obligation upon a Man to do whatever he has sworn, yet if a Man swears to do any thing which is a sin, and contrary to some former Obligation, under which he indispensably lyes to God or Man, he can not in this case be obliged to keep his Oath, but is bound to repent of it. For, besides that it is not reasonable, that any mans own act should free him from any Obligation under which he lyes to another; it is plain, that an Oath can neither alter the nature of a sin, nor make it lawful to commit it. And since the design of an Oath in its own nature is

is to oblige him to performance that takes it ; and since the Name of God ought never unnecessarily to be invoked ; it follows, that *where a Man ought not to keep an Oath, he ought, not on any account to take it.*

15. According to the Customs of different places, there have divers Ceremonies and Forms of words been introduced in the taking of an Oath ; some of them grounded upon Reason, and others taken up through mistake in imitation. Thus, probably, whereas it may have been a Custom in some places in an Oath to invoke the Vengeance of God upon ones *head* ; from hence, likely, might arise

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that

that Form of swearing by the Head; and, in imitation thereof, by the Hand, or other parts of the Body. And whereas it was usual to take solemn Oaths, in extraordinary cases, in the Temple, or at the Altar, and, with us at this time, laying the Hand upon the Holy Scriptures; from hence might arise the Forms of swearing by the Temple, the Altar, the Bible, &c. But here it must be noted, that the nature of an Oath being for assurance, and consisting therefore altogether in the intention of the parties, *viz.* as well of him who requires it, as of him who gives it; *He may be said really and truly to swear, not only who*
makes

makes use of such a Form and Ceremony as is accustomed or prescribed in any certain place, but he *who any ways signifies to another an intention to oblige himself under the penalty of God's Wrath and Vengeance:* And for the same reason *the joyn't intention of both parties, as it appears fairly to be signified (without any place for Fraud or Collusion) must needs be the true measure of the obligation of every Oath.*

16. When a Man promises a thing, and obliges himself thereto, not to any other Man, but only to God alone; this is what is commonly called a *Vow*; and, comes so exactly under the same Rules with a *Promisory Oath* (as will presently

sently appear to whosoever reads the two foregoing Sections) that I need not again particularly repeat them. But it is a very necessary caution to be observed in all Oaths, and more especially to be taken care of in Vows; that *a Man should never voluntarily oblige himself to any thing but what he is well assured is within his power to perform*; I mean with the help of that common Assistance and Grace which God has promised to all that seek it. For if a Man goes beyond this, and tyes such Burdens upon himself as he is not sufficiently sure of strength to bear; besides the presumption of the thing, it must needs involve his

his Conscience in many Difficulties and Perplexities.

17. Since there is no other Being whatsoever, which for Power, Goodness, or excellency of Nature can any way be equalled to, or compared with, Almighty God; from hence it will follow, that all *these foregoing Duties, which we owe unto God* on the account and supposition of the Transcendency of his Nature and Attributes, *are not any of them to be paid unto any Thing or Person besides himself.* For that would be in effect to set up somewhat else as a God, or in the place of God, unto our selves. Let them then who seem either to love, or fear, or trust in, any Thing or Person

Person as much or more than God; and who offer up their Prayers and Devotions unto any Saints or Angels; which seems to suppose their Omniscience, and that they know the Secrets of Mens Hearts; and to argue some distrust of God's Goodness and Readiness to hear us; Let them, I say, and such like persons, consider well with themselves, how, they can answer these things to God, who is a jealous God. But since *every Man*, who is sincere in Religion, *must necessarily suit his Worship and Duty to God according to the apprehensions which he has of the Deity*; He who is convinced of the distinction
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of Persons in the Unity of the God-head (of which I have endeavoured to give my Thoughts Part 2. §. 22.) *cannot, I think, but make the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, the joynt Objects of his Service and Devotion.* And why it should not be both lawful and proper to invoke the Son and Holy Ghost, together with the Father, in our Prayers, as well as to be Baptized, and to Bless, in their Names, together with him (which are both I think acts of Divine Worship) I confess I can see no sound reason that can be given. But if any man shall tell me, that, in the Worship of God, he dares proceed no farther than the Holy Scriptures

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Scriptures will expressly warrant, and therefore that he can not invoke the Holy Ghost in his Prayers, because he there finds neither Precept for, nor Example of it (Judging no Man, but leaving every Man to stand or fall to his own Master) for my self I answer, that since God has made us reasonable Creatures, I can not but think that a clear, and rational Consequence from Scripture is as good a Warrant for any religious action, and lays as great an Obligation upon him that is convinced of it, as the most express Text: And if the Personality and Divinity of the Holy Ghost be admitted (as I here suppose) to me, no
 Confe-

Consequence seems to be clearer than that he is to be invoked and worshiped, together with the Father and the Son.

18. Since the end to which God designs all Men, is eternal Happiness in another life ; Part 2. §. 29. To a capacity for which we are again, after our Fall, restored by Jesus Christ, Part 2. §. 33, &c. It follows, that *we ought not to do any thing whereby we may miss of this end, or be diverted from the prosecution of it ; But on the contrary, that the whole course of our actions and endeavours should ever be bent on the pursuit of it.*

19. No Man will ever be diligent in the pursuit of any thing

thing of which he seldom thinks, and rarely considers the benefit of obtaining, and the evil of missing it. If therefore we are obliged to be diligent in our endeavours after eternal Happiness; *we ought to make the Joys of Heaven and the Torments of Hell the subject of our frequent Thoughts and Meditations.*

20. He who places his Happiness, or any part of it, upon a wrong Object, will never be so diligent as he ought in the pursuit of that true Happiness, to which he is designed by God; because the stream of his Thoughts and Endeavours must needs, in the whole, or in part, be diverted, according as he apprehends

prehends his Happiness to lie another way. Now that there is nothing in this World (except a good Conscience, and the hope of eternal Life, which, tho they may be had in this World, yet are not of the World) that can any way make up a part of our real Happiness, is abundantly demonstrable from the vanity, uncertainty and shortness of all worldly Joys. He therefore who places any part of his Happiness upon any thing belonging to this World, most certainly, places it upon a wrong Object. But whatsoever a Man proposes to himself as the ultimate End of any of his actions, it is certain that, therein he places some part,

part, at least, of his Happiness: For that which is the ultimate End of any action of a Man, must be proposed as the final satisfaction of some of his Desires (for as far as any one's Desire extends, so far off must be the End he aims at) and no Desire of any Man can ever be finally satisfied, till it meets with that wherein he supposes his Happiness (in whole or in part) to consist. From hence then it will follow, that altho there are some Pleasures and Satisfaction in this World, which may innocently be enjoyed, yet *No man ought to propose any worldly enjoyment as the ultimate End and Design of any of his Actions.* For this would be

be a placing his Happiness, or some part of it, upon a wrong Object, and thereby a hinderance of his pursuit of the true Happiness for which God designs him. To illustrate this, which otherwise may seem obscure, by an Example or two. A Man may lawfully, without doubt, relish the Meat he eats (for to what other end did God give us the Sense of Tasting) but the reason of his eating, at all times, ought to be to preserve his Life and Health, that he may be the better able to do all those things which God requires from him in order to his Salvation ; this being the End for which God designs him, and which he therefore ought

ought always to pursue. But he who in eating designs no more than to gratifie his sensual Appetite, or to pamper his Body that he may have the greater enjoyment of the rest of the Pleasures of this World; acts below, or rather contrary to, the End he is designed for; and may justly be compared to the Beasts that perish. Thus also a Man may innocently be pleased to have the Garment he wears, decent and comely, because the Eye is naturally gratified with the beauty of any Object: But if a Man wears Cloths which are more fine and costly than some others, his reason ought to be that he may not (according to the humour of the world

world) be contemned for the Meaness or Sordidness of his Apparel ; but endeavour, by all fair ways, to preserve such a Respect among Men (who are very apt to judge by the outward appearance) as may enable him to do the more good in the world : But he who cloths himself like the Lillies of the Field, or *Solomon* in all his Glory, only that he may admire himself, or be taken notice of by others, for his remarkable Finery, is a vain person, and acts as foolishly as the Crow in the Fable, who clad himself in the Peacocks Feathers. And what I have here said concerning Food and Raiment, may also be applyed to Riches and Honour,

Honour, and to all Pleasures, which are not absolutely unlawful ; and to every thing which Men aim at, or value in this World ; which they may lawfully seek after and take delight in, as far as they may be Instruments of doing Good, or are consistent with their Christian Duty ; but they must not place their Happiness, or any part of it, in them ; for that would make them forgetful of Heaven, and necessarily involve them in the sins of Ambition, Covetousness , Voluptuousness, &c.

21. As we are obliged to do whatsoever God commands, and patiently to suffer whatsoever he, in his Providence, shall

all think fit to lay or inflict
 on us; so, for the same rea-
 sons, are we certainly bound
 to continue in this both doing
 and patiently suffering, until
 such time as he shall be pleas-
 ed of his own Will, to free
 and dismiss us from it. From
 whence it follows, that no
 man ought, upon any account,
 to lay violent hands upon him-
 self, or voluntarily contribute to
 the shortning of his own Life,
 because he knows not but that
 God might be willing to exer-
 cise him yet farther, with Suf-
 ferings or other tryals, to his
 glory, and the good of his
 Soul. Nor ought any
 man, without leave or li-
 cence, to withdraw himself
 from the Service of his Ma-
 ster.

ster. And the same reason which forbids us to destroy our Lives, should also keep us from putting them to any unreasonable or unnecessary hazard.

22. He who in Duty is obliged to any thing, lies also, of necessity, under an Obligation to qualifie himself as well as he can, and to seek after, and make use of all such Means and Instruments as are necessary for the better executing and compassing that same thing to which he is so obliged. Since then *Health of Body, Knowledge and Understanding, and a competency of Riches, Power and Authority,* are necessary Qualifications and Instruments for the better perform-

performance of many of those Duties, to which we stand obliged by God's Law; it follows, that these *are things which every man, according to his capacity, ought to seek and endeavour after.* But we must not strive nor seek for any of these things by Ways or Means that are unlawful and wicked; for that would be, beforehand, to destroy and frustrate the very End and Design, for which alone they are to be sought and desired: namely Virtue, Piety and the Service of God.

23. On the other side; Whatsoever is an impediment or obstacle to the performance of any necessary Duty, we are bound, as far as we are

able, to suppress or remove it out of the way. Now our Reason being that which first leads us to the Knowledge of Religion, and always enables us rightly to understand and judge of our Duty ; And since all violent Passions, and over-eager Affections, do disturb our Reason, and very much hinder the free use and exercise of it ; It follows, that we ought always so to govern our Passions and restrain all our Affections, as that they may be wholly subservient to, and never over-rule or mislead, our Reason.

24. Since God is the Creator, and therefore also the absolute Lord of all things; every thing certainly ought
by

by us to be always put and applied to that very same end and use (and no other) for which it was intended by him, as far as we have any intimation of his design, either from Reason or Revelation. Hence then it will follow, that those Creatures which God has given us, to feed, sustain and keep us in health, that we may be the better able to do our Duty, and labour in our several Callings, ought not at any time (much less ordinarily) to be used to Excess, so as to impair our Health, or discompose our Reason, or any way hinder us in the performance of any Duty: And that Faculty of Generation, which

God has endowed us with, in order to the propagation of Mankind, ought not to be abused for the sake of filthy sensual Pleasure. Nor ought that plenty of Creatures, which God has bestowed upon us for the service of all Men, without exception, to be engrossed into the hands of any certain Men, so as that others should want the Necessaries of Life, whilst they abound in Superfluity. By which it appears, that *Gluttony and Drunkenness, Lust and Covetousness* are sins, and always to be avoided; and therefore, on the contrary, that *Temperance, Chastity, Charity, and Liberality* are Duties, and always to be practised.

25. Experience assures us, that the Spirit of Man is of an active nature; and, rather than be altogether idle, will be apt to employ its self in that which is evil. Nor does a man ever lie more open to Temptation than when he has nothing at all to do. *He therefore that would keep himself innocent, must be careful always to avoid Idleness.* For besides that Idleness would prove a Snare to us; It is a shame and a sin. When there is so much of God's work to be done in the world (for the promoting of his Glory and the Publick good of Mankind) that any man, who pretends to be his Servant, should stand still, and not put his

H 4 helping

helping hand to the carrying of it on. But as we cannot say that a Man is idle, when he lies down to sleep; that, being thereby refreshed, he may be the better able again to labour; so must we by no means pass that Censure on him, who now and then spends some small portion of his Time in some pleasant and innocent Recreation; that, having his Thoughts hereby a little relaxed and diverted, he may be the fitter to return to Business of moment and consequence. But as for those persons, whose whole life almost is nothing else but Diversion; and who scarce ever set themselves to any employment, whereby either God is glorified,

glorified, or others benefited; what can they expect but the same Sentence, which is pronounced upon the idle and unprofitable Servant, *Mat. 25. 26.* And if, to be altogether idle and unemployed is not to be excused or justified; how much more are they to be condemned who are so frequently employed in such things as are evil and scandalous?

26. Since the right knowledge of our Duty arises chiefly from a true judgment concerning the circumstances and qualifications of Things and Persons, it follows, that every Man should endeavour, as far as he is able, *to inform himself rightly, and to frame true Notions, in all points, of and*

concerning God, Himself, and other Men; to whom there are Duties owing; and also of all those things which are the subjects of any of those Duties, and in the true management whereof, such Duties do consist. For if he be mistaken in his Judgment concerning either of these, he must of necessity take wrong Measures in his actions. Thus, for Example, if a Man should not believe God to be eternal, most good, wise and powerful, &c. it would not be possible for him to love, honour and fear him in that degree that he ought to do; And if we do not always remember our selves to be frail Creatures, subject to Passions and Infirmities

firmities, of short continuance in this World, and that, whatever Excellency we may seem to have, we derive it wholly from God and his Providence, and not from our selves; we shall never be able so effectually as we ought, to govern our Passions, and restrain our Affections from the things of this World, and pursue that End for which God has designed us. And if we do not consider that other Men (whatever accidental Differences there may be between us) are equal to us in nature, that their Souls are as precious in God's sight as ours, that Christ died for them, as much as for us, &c. We shall not be inclined to behave

have our selves to them with that Justice, Charity and Humility which do evidently appear to be our Duty. And, lastly, if we do not frame a true Notion of the Vanity of the things of this World, and the Excellency of the Joys of Heaven; we shall never be able to prefer the later before the former, in such a measure as we ought to do.

27. Altho the chief Happiness of Mankind is reserved by God to be enjoyed in another life, by those who heartily strive for it whilst they are in this; yet can I find no reason to think that he has decreed us all, or any of us, to be absolutely miserable whilst we remain in this World. On
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the contrary, since God has originally a love for all Mankind in general, Part 2. §. 16. I cannot but conclude, that he always (even in this life) designs at least some share or beginning of Happiness for every Man; and never afflicts, or suffers any Man to be afflicted, but only in order to his greater Happiness hereafter; until such time as he thinks it proper to pour out his Vengeance and final Destruction upon such as have by their Wickedness altogether forfeited his Love and Favour. Since then God originally designs some measure or commencement of Happiness to all Men, even in this life, as well as eternal Happiness

ness hereafter ; it follows, that we (who ought as much as we can to be subservient to all God's Deligns) should endeavour as much as in us lies, to promote the Happiness of every Man, both in relation to this World , and of that which is to come. Or in other terms , that *every Man should endeavour to do as much good to all others as he can, and to hurt no man whatsoever, if he can avoid it.*

28. But if every Man always kept singly by himself, without any Society or Inter-
course with others ; it would be impossible to do any good one to another. And therefore I conclude, that it is the Will of God that *Mankind should*

should live each with other in a state of Society. And to make us all the more sensible of the necessity and obligation that lies upon us thus to live with, and do good to others, God has so ordered the state and condition of all Mankind, that it is not possible for any Man long to subsist, much less to enjoy any sort of Comfort or satisfaction in this Life, without the good will and assistance of others; which he has no reason to expect, except he be ready upon all occasions to retaliate what he himself so continually stands in need of. And since God's original Love to Mankind is not confined to some certain persons, but universally extended

tended to all ; I must needs conclude, that he designs not only the Comfort and Happiness of some particulars ; but universally of all Men whatsoever. And since the more universal the Society between Men is, the more universal the Happiness which thence results will be ; it will evidently follow, that it is God's Will that every Man should behave himself after a sociable and friendly manner, to every other Man, without exception. And since there is no Man in the World, however weak and poor, or at never so great a distance from me, but it is possible that things may fall out so as that, one time or other, I may, in my Distress,

Distress, stand in need of his Help and Friendship, my Reason tells me, that it is my Interest, as well as Duty, as much as I am able, beforehand to oblige every Man who comes in my way, by doing Offices of Civility and Kindness to him, as occasion offers.

29. That God has given to Mankind in general the free Liberty to make use of all other Creatures for their support and sustenance, my Reason, as well as the Holy Scripture, does assure me; because without some of them we could not preserve our selves in being; and if we had not liberty to destroy others of them for our use, they would
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in time so over-spread the Face of the Earth, as that we could not have any safe or convenient Habitation upon it. But if all these Creatures were always to remain in common, so that no Man should have a Right to take possession of any part of them to his own particular use and disposal, and to exclude others therefrom; the Consequence must needs be perpetual Discord and Confusion. For when I had prepared Food to sustain my Hunger, or Rayment to defend me from the Cold; if every other Man should have still as good a Right thereto as I, any one might lawfully take it away from me; and if my Right were as good as
any

any others, I might also lawfully Defend my Possession; from which state of things Contention and Strife must eternally and unavoidably arise. I therefore conclude, that there must be some Laws of Property and Right; and that *every man must yield to others that which is their own*, or else there can be no such thing as Society and Beneficence preserved and kept up amongst Mankind. Now in order to discover these same Laws of Right and Property, whereby every man is to know what is truly his own, I lay down this general Rule, as a thing most reasonable, That, Whereas originally every Mans Right and Title to every

every thing may be esteemed equal (God having given us all the Creatures in common, and not, by any act of his, divided to each Man his several Property) If there be any apparent, or but probable, ground why such or such a particular thing should be the Property of one Man rather than of another, that ought so to determine the matter as to oblige all other Men quietly to yield and suffer him to enjoy and use that same thing, whatever it be, as his own. For where the Ballance stands exactly even, a small matter is enough to turn the Scale to one side. Now in these following Cases there seems to be great Reason

Reason for determining a Property in a thing to particular persons, *viz.* 1. When a Man is the first that takes actual Possession of a thing, and converts it to his own use. For such a Possession is an addition to his general Right beyond what any other Man, who never was in Possession, can pretend. And why should I part with my Possession to any other, or he demand it from me, except he were able to make out a better Title than I to the thing in dispute? 2. When a Man takes Possession of a thing, which is actually rejected and deserted by him, who last had the Right to, and Possession of it. For his Case seems to be much the

the same with his who first takes Possession of a thing,

3. When a thing is given, or in Exchange made over, to another by him who had before a just Right thereto: for it is highly reasonable, that every Man should have liberty to dispose of his own,

4. When a Company of People do by an Agreement make a Partition of what was before in Common amongst them all, it is reasonable that every Man should acquiesce in that share which upon such a Division, shall fall to his Lot.

5. When a Man takes care and pains to produce and rear any thing for his own use or profit, it is reasonable that he (and not another Man against

only

his

his Consent) should enjoy the benefit of his own Labour. And lastly, where a Society of People do submit their Properties unto a legislative Power which is erected amongst them, it is reasonable that herein they should always be concluded and determined by the Laws of that Community, of which they are Members. And if there be any other Rules for determining the Rights of Men to particular things, it is most evident, that due care must be taken to keep and observe them, or else farewell all Order and Society.

30. Where Fidelity is wanting, Society cannot be truly kept and preserved. I therefore
fore

fore conclude, that every man is obliged faithfully to perform whatever he Promises ; except the person to whom the Promise is made, do freely acquit and discharge him from it. But if a Man promises to do a thing which is sinful, he ought not to keep such a Promise as that ; as I have already shewn in the Case of an Oath.

31. And the same Reasons which oblige us to hurt no Man, to yield to every Man his Right, and to keep our Promises, do plainly shew, that *he who wrongfully hurts another, or deprives him of his Right, or breaks his Promise made to him, ought, as far as he is able, to make full Restitution*

tion and Satisfaction to the person whom he has thus injured. For he that makes a Breach in humane Society, is doubtless obliged, as far as he can, to repair it.

32. Where a Proposition is literally false, and yet spoken with no manner of intention to deceive another, it is not to be called a Lye : But he who asserts any thing for a Truth, with an intent to make another believe it, which is, or for ought he knows may be, false, he only is to be esteemed a Lyar. Now some have doubted whether the sin of a Lye consists in the bare Untruth, or only in the Injustice of it; and from thence have been inclined to believe, that
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such a Lye as does no hurt to any one, nor draws any manner of evil consequence after it, is not to be looked on as a sin ; and so much the less, if it be told with a real design only to do Good, or prevent Mischief. The Niceties of this Controversy I leave to be discussed by others. But since humane Society cannot be upheld without, in many cases, a dependence upon one another's Veracity, I may surely venture thus far to conclude; *viz.* That, not only such a Lye as tends to the damage of another; but also *such a Lye*, however otherwise innocent, *as gives occasion to render a Man's Truth suspected in other cases,* is to be reputed *unlawful*, if for

no other Reason, yet at least
fore this, because it is injuri-
ous to humane Society. *And*
the same Reason will hold as
strongly against all mental Re-
servations and equivocal Ex-
pressions: For what is humane
Society at any time the better
for the literal Truth of what
a Man says, if others who are
therein concerned, do not un-
derstand his true meaning by
the words which he speaks to
them?

33. It is highly reasonable
that every Man should have
such an Esteem and Respect
shewed him, as may be pro-
portionable to his Virtues and
good Qualities: And as it is
proper enough for a Man, by
lawful ways, to assert his own
I 2 Repu-

Reputation whenever it is unjustly aspersed; so he ought to take especial care in the management of all his Words and Actions, that he may not seem to exalt or magnifie himself, or to despise or undervalue others beyond what is not only just and true, but also necessary, either for the bringing about something that is good, or the preventing something that is evil. For there is scarce any thing that gives greater disgust, or helps to render a Man more odious to the World, than an over-forwardness to praise and magnifie himself, and to undervalue others, if he be not necessitated thereto by some very just Reason: And on the

the contrary, there is scarce any thing which reconciles a Man more to the Favour and Good Will of People, than when he is not over-apt to ascribe much to himself, but is ready to give the utmost Honour and Respect to all others that in reason can be thought due. I conclude therefore, that *Pride is a Sin, and Humility a Duty*, because the former tends to disturb, but the latter strengthens and confirms humane Society.

34. What is incumbent upon him to do, who has done wrong to another, I have just now shewn: But if another Man wrongs, or any way endeavours to Injure me; As it is lawful for me (so for
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every Man) to stand upon my defence, and use my utmost endeavours to save my self from Wrong, or recover that which is my Right ; (for otherwise all the good and honest Men in the World would continually lie exposed to the Wrongs and Insults of any evil Man, who might have a mind to destroy them) so I, and every Man ought to be ready at any time to be reconciled to an Adversary or Enemy; provided it may be upon such terms as are consistent with our own Safety: Nor ought any Man upon any occasion to do any greater harm to his keenest Enemy, than what he apprehends to be absolutely necessary to his own preservation.

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For since Society and Peace among Mankind is the Will and design of Almighty God ; If a breach be made therein by another, I ought for my part to do nothing which may make it wider ; but ever to be ready to give a helping hand to the closing and making up of it.

35. Hitherto I have endeavoured to lay down the main and fundamental Rules of that Duty, which every Man is obliged to pay and perform to God, to Himself, and to all other Men. Now to deduce all the particular branches of Virtue and Piety from these main Principles ; and to shew how Morality is improved and refined by the Gospel to

the highest degree of perfection, is a thing not difficult to be done, but yet inconsistent with my designed Brevity: For which therefore I must refer my Reader to some of those Books of Christian Piety, wherein each Particular of our Duty is, at large, described and pressed. But in the mean time if we would have a shorter Abstract of our Duty than what I have now been giving; The Holy Scripture furnishes us with three Rules (two exprest, and one implied) from which every thing that we can be obliged to do, is easily deduced; And they are, 1. That we *should love God with all our Heart Soul and Strength.* 2. That we *should*

should truly love our Selves, that is to say, so as always to aim at and pursue our true and chief Happiness: And 3. *That we should love others as we do our Selves:* Not with the same degree of Love; for that is not only unreasonable, but impossible; but with the same Reality and Sincerity; or, in other terms, that *we should ever do unto all other Men what we would think reasonable that they should do unto us,* if we were in their Circumstances and they in ours. But besides these general Duties, which are indiscriminately incumbent upon all Men; there are divers particular ones, which do arise from those several Relations which

Men may contract and bear to others, of which it is fit that I give some brief Account.

36. That God would have the Generation of Men continued and increased upon the Earth, is very evident; as well from the natural inclination which he has implanted in them (as in all other living Creatures) to propagate their Kind; as from that Love and Affection which is common to them with other Creatures towards those who spring from them. But if Mankind were propagated only by the exercise of wild and wandering Lust, without confinement to any settled Rules or Laws; this would bring

bring in such a Deluge of Confusion and disturbance, as would unavoidably deprive them of the greatest part of those satisfactions which at the present they do, or may, enjoy. For if there were no such thing as settled Marriages, we can hardly suppose that ever there would be any sort of settled Families, which are the first beginnings of Society and regularity amongst Men; Fathers would not know which were their own Children, and consequently would take no care to bring them up, or provide for them; and not only the pain of bearing, but the whole trouble of nourishing rearing and providing for Children, would lie

lie wholly upon the Female Sex, who by themselves could but very imperfectly perform that work as it should be done. Since therefore God intends the Comfort and satisfaction of Men, even whilst they are here upon Earth, I conclude, that it is his Will, that *Mankind should be propagated no other way but by settled Marriages*, that is, by a Compact and Agreement between the Male and Female, and that under such Rules as are fit and proper to promote the general Happiness of Mankind, which being his great design, ought ever also to be ours.

37. That a Woman should have more than one Husband

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at a time, is notoriously contrary to the design of Marriage, and therefore directly unlawful: And that a Man should have more than one Wife, at a time, the experience of many, in former Ages; and, at this time, in the Eastern Countries, does sufficiently testifie to be contrary to that peace and quietness which is necessary to the Comfort and Happiness of every Family; and therefore not so agreeable to that universal Friendship which ought ever to be preserved amongst Men; but especially among those who are so nearly allyed together. Moreover, if Men and their Wives should have liberty to part one from the other,

other, whenever they please (besides the Confusion and disturbance which this also must breed in Familiés, especially where there are Children in the case) Marriage would hardly differ from that wild and wandering Lust, against which I have spoken in the preceding Paragraph. I conclude therefore, that altho, before the coming of Christ, if a Man took more Wives than one, not for Lust (which is unlawful *g.* 24.) but meerly for Propagation; it might in some cases be dispensed with; yet it ever was most pleasing to God, that a Man should have but one Wife at a time; and that nothing but Death should ever

part.

part a Man and his Wife ; except the evil Behaviour of one party should make the continuance of the Marriage Compact and Cohabitation , not only something uneasy (for that for peace and quietness sake should be born patiently) but down-right intolerable. But these things which Reason may perhaps but imperfectly suggest, the Gospel has passed and established into Laws ; viz. that, *as every Woman is to have but one Husband, so no Man must have more than one Wife at a time ; nor must any thing part Man and Wife but Death,* except it be the case of Adultery : And better, much it is, that particular persons should sometimes

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times be forced to labour
under some Inconvenience,
than that any such Liberty
should be allowed as tends
to disturb and distract the
World.

38. We generally find, that
all Men, even Heathens as
well as Jews and Christians,
have conceived a more than
ordinary abhorrence against
the Marriage of such persons
as were very nearly Allied
together within some certain
Degrees of Relation. And
since the World is wide e-
nough for a Man to chuse a
Wife, or a Woman a Hus-
band; those general Rules
which are given to us, in
Scripture, of providing for
things honest, not only in the
fight

sight of God, but of Men also; and of taking care, not only about such things as are just and honest, but also about such as are lovely and of good report; should teach us that *no person should engage in such a Marriage as is by wise men commonly reputed to be incestuous and unlawful.*

39. Since the relation of Husband and Wife, is wholly owing to the mutual Compact and Agreement which is made between them at their Marriage; the Duties which result from that Relation can be no other but the faithful keeping and observing of that same Compact and Agreement, the Conditions of which, may be more or fewer according as
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the parties shall think convenient. But these are always necessary, and must never be wanting; *viz.* that *the Husband and Wife must sincerely love each other; must be strictly faithful to each others* Bed (without which, mutual Love can never be preserved intimate) and Christianity expressly adds, what Reason perhaps does also obscurely suggest, that *the Wife must be subject and obedient to her Husband.*

40. When Children are begotten and brought forth into the World, it is not reasonable, nor agreeable to God's design, that they should perish and dye for want of care to be taken of them. Nor are there

there any Persons upon whom a greater obligation can lye to bring up Children, than upon those who begat them, and were the cause of their being : And since God intends not the Misery and Affliction ; but generally the Comfort and satisfaction of Mankind upon Earth, as well as their Happiness hereafter in Heaven ; I conclude, that *it is ever the Duty of Parents to take the best care they can to bring up their Children, and to promote their true Happiness,* both in this World, and that which is to come. For which reason we must needs suppose them to be vested with a lawful Power of governing and chastising them, as far as is necessary to keep

keep them in good and regular order.

41. And on the other side, since *Children* are beholding to their Parents, even for their very Being, whereby they are capacitated, not only for the enjoyment of the Satisfaction of this Life, but also for eternal Happiness in the World to come; it is highly reasonable, that they *should love their Parents with a very high degree of Affection*; and should always be ready to make them the best returns of Duty and Service that they can. And according as Parents have been careful in bringing up and making Provision for their Children, so the Childrens Love and Affection ought still

still more and more to be returned and expressed towards them.

42. Where Parents, by Death or otherwise, are rendered incapable of nourishing and breeding up a Child; or where they utterly forsake and expose him to the wide World, before he is able to provide for, or take care of himself; If another person takes him, and maintains and puts him in a way of living, *such a Child is in all reason obliged to pay a proportionable share of filial Love and Duty to him who has performed the part of a Parent to him.*

43. It is not pretended, that ever any Person or Family, by name; were ever,
by

by God's particular and revealed Appointment, invested with the Power of governing over such or such a certain People; excepting only the case of the People of *Israel*; I therefore conclude, that however *the Magistracy which is lawfully established throughout the World*, is ordained of God; it is not by immediate Revelation from Heaven.

44. Whether a Parent by the Law of Nature has the Power of a supreme Magistrate over his own Children, is not necessary here to enquire. But I see no ground in Reason or Nature, to judge that the eldest Son of any Kindred successively should have the same Power over his Brothers

thers and Sisters (who are no way beholding to him for their Being, nor, it may be, for their well-being) and much less over his Fathers Brothers and Sisters; as the common Parent of a whole Family may have over all that spring from him. I conclude therefore, that *lawful Magistracy is not to be derived by the Law of Nature from the alone right of Primogeniture*; Nor do we ever meet with any Prince in History, who derived his Authority from this only Fountain; and if this were the true Right and Title of Magistracy, it would follow, that all the World ought to be but one Monarchy; and *Adam's Heir Male the Emperour*

perour thereof; and all the Kings and Emperours that ever were, whose Titles were originally bottom'd upon another Foundation, were no better than meer Usurpers.

45. Where one Man conquers another; that is to say, by force of Arms, or by Stratagem, gets him so into his Power, as that he can destroy or kill him at his pleasure; the conquered person indeed, being obliged to do all that honestly he can for the preservation of his own Life, ought, on that account, to use his best endeavours by an obsequious Demeanour to assuage and pacifie the Fury of the Conquerour. But, farther than he finds necessary to his

his own Preservation, he is not obliged to obey the Conquerour; except he binds himself thereto by some act of his own; there being no Law of God or Nature which lays any farther Obligation on him in that case but only to preserve himself, without doing wrong to another. Since then all the World does allow that Subject is bound to obey the Magistrate, who is lawfully set over him, even in those cases where no danger, in this world, would attend his Disobedience, or, as the Apostle expresses it, *not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience*. It will follow, that Conscience alone, without any Contract or Agreement, does not
K *establisb*

establiſh the Conquerour a lawful Magiſtrate over the conquered People. For if it did, there could be no difference between a Liege Subject, and a Prisoner of War.

46. If any man unjustly invades the Property, or attempts the Life of another, It is lawful for him, to whom the Wrong is offered, to defend himself the best he can; And if he has no other way of securing himself, nor can prevail with his Enemy to desist from his evil Design, the necessity of preserving himself from Death, or (which may be as bad, or worse) from Ruin, will certainly justify the Killing of him. For otherwise the Lives and Fortunes

tunes of all honest Men must for ever be exposed to the arbitrary pleasure of every lawless and wicked person, which is contrary to that comfort and satisfactory state, which we suppose God generally to design for Men, even in this Life. And that which is allowable for every single Man to do for himself, is surely no less lawful for a Society of Men combining together, to do for their joynt and mutual Safety. Moreover, if in such a Society any person be taken in, or after, such an unlawful Attempt, it is lawful for them to punish him in such a manner (whether by death or otherwise) as may be necessary to terrifie

others from doing the like for the time to come: For without this, there could be no security against evil doers; who might contrive to act their Mischief so secretly, as not to be killed, or even resisted in the very fact it self. But if such a Society have not certain Laws and Rules to proceed by in all such cases, and some certain persons to put those Laws in execution; every Man would take upon him to be his own Judge; and what might seem fit and reasonable to one, might appear otherwise to another of a contrary interest, from whence perpetual Factions and Confusion must needs follow. But there is no reason that

that any one, or more of such a Society, without the consent of the rest, should take upon them to make Laws for, or exercise Authority over the whole Community. For if it were in every Mans power to make himself a Magistrate, all might set up to be Rulers, and few or none would be Subjects; which would bring in Confusion, and destroy the Society. But when the whole Society do agree and consent, that such certain persons shall have the exercising of such certain Powers (which originally are in the Body of the Society it self) it is then lawful for those persons to act accordingly; and they who have consented to their Authority

are, by virtue of that Consent, obliged to pay Obedience to them. I conclude therefore, that *the Original of Magistrates is from the Consent of the People*, since there is no other solid ground, that I can find, upon which to establish them. *And when once a legislative and executive Power is thus settled and established by the consent of a People, who acquiesce in it, and upon all occasions take shelter under its Protection; it is to be looked upon as ratified and confirmed by God's own appointment; and Subjection and Obedience is accordingly to be paid to it by every particular person who abides within the precincts of its Jurisdiction. For this was the*
very

very case of the Roman Government, which was in St. Paul's time; and there is exactly the same reason for it in all other Kingdoms and Commonwealths whatsoever.

47. Since then Magistracy derives it self wholly from the Consent of the People; from hence it will follow, that *the Original Rule of the Magistrates Power and the Subjects obedience*, is that Consent which the People has given; or, in other terms, *those Laws and Constitutions of the place, in which the Body of the Nation have acquiesced*: Beyond which neither any Magistrate ought to command, nor is any Subject bound to obey. For where there is no Law, there

can be no Transgression, nor any Obligation to Obedience; nor consequently any Right to Command.

48. But if the legislative Power of any Nation do enact any thing which is contrary to the express Law of God, or the eternal Laws of good and evil; No particular Man can be bound to obey such a Constitution. For the Authority of God ought to weigh more with us, than that of any Community whatsoever; And it is expressly ruled in Scripture, that we ought to obey God rather than Man.

49. And the same Reason (*viz.* Self-preservation) which allows a Society, thus settled into a Government, to pu-
nish

nish Malefactors within themselves; must also justifie them, if by force of Arms they defend themselves against any foreign Enemy, which would wrong or oppress them; or endeavour to recover their Right from those who have taken it from them, and refuse to restore it. For otherwise it were in vain for a Community to hope to subsist by maintaining good Order and Discipline at home; if all the while they must, without remedy, lye continually exposed to the Wrongs and Insults of every Enemy which may assault them from abroad. I conclude therefore, that *War*, whether defensive or offensive, may in many cases, be very just and

lawful: Nor is there the least word throughout the Holy Scriptures, which may represent the Profession of a *Soldier*, who fights under a lawful Authority, as any way contrary to Religion and a good Conscience: Tho such a Man certainly ought not only to exercise his calling with as much Mildness and Humanity as can be consistent with the service of his Country; but also ever to satisfy himself first of the lawfulness of the Cause in which he engages, before he draws his *Sword in the Quarrel*: For as we are obliged to do no hurt to any Man whatsoever, if we can avoid it; so, for the very same reason, ought we not to become instrumental in
any

any Wrong or Injustice which another Man (let him be who he will) intends to do.

50. That *an humble De-*
meanour, together with a reason-
able Diligence, and an honest
Fidelity to his Master, is the
Duty of every Servant, is most
apparent; because if a Ser-
vant be either haughty, neg-
ligent, or unfaithful, he ceases
in effect to be a Servant. And
on the other side, that Justice
and Humanity are no less the
Duty of a Master towards his
Servant is altogether as clear,
because where these are not
observed, the Condition of a
Servant must be intolerable,
and contrary to that comfort-
able state which we suppose
God to design for all Men;
 and.

and therefore for Servants, who are as much Men, and as much valued by God, and for whom Christ died, as well as for their Masters.

51. That *all Christians* are, or (according to Christs Institution) *ought to be, combined together into one Society*, which is called *the Church*, I have already said Part 2. §. 40. Now in all such incorporated Societies these three things are ever to be considered, 1. What is the Design of the person or persons, who first gather and institute them? 2. What Advantage accrues to those who become Members of them? And 3dly. what are the Laws and Rules to be observed by the whole Body, and every Member

Member of it? The Design of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who, at the Will of his heavenly Father, instituted and embodied the Christian Church, was to purifie unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good works, or, in other terms, by this Incorporation so made, more effectually to promote the practice of Virtue and Godliness in the World. The benefit and advantage which every true Member of this Church may propose to himself, is the participation of God's Grace and assistance here for the better performance of his Duty, and the enjoyment of everlasting Happiness hereafter; both which are promised to us by
God

God in and through Christ Jesus our Saviour. And lastly, the Laws of the Christian Church are either, 1. The general Laws of Piety and Morality, of which I have hitherto been giving an account; or, 2. Such particular Constitutions as are proper to it, considered as a congregated and incorporated Body of Men; which I have reserved to be treated of in the last place of all.

52. *The first thing which is incumbent on every Man, as (or rather, in order to become) a Member of the Christian Church, is to be baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: Which Ceremony is intended to put us*
in

in mind of that Purity and Cleanness from sin to which we ought to bring our Souls by a virtuous and holy life : And altho to wet or wash the Body with Water, may seem but a slight and inconsiderable thing ; yet since our Saviour Christ has expressly appointed and commanded it, and since his Apostles were always most careful to perform it ; insomuch that even they who had received the extraordinary Gift of the Holy Ghost from Heaven, were yet required to be Baptized, in order to become visible Members of the Church ; This Ceremony, I think, ought not to be left off, or discontinued. Altho whether it be per-

performed by dipping the Body under the Water, or by sprinkling the Water upon it, to me seems to be altogether indifferent; and to be regulated only by Prudence, or the Custom of particular places. For neither does the word *Baptize* signifie any more than to Wash; which may be done either way; nor does it appear that the Apostles dipped all those whom they baptized. Moreover, since sprinkling, as well as dipping, may sufficiently denote the washing and cleansing of the Soul from sin; and since Baptism is not expressly, in the Holy Scripture, determined to either of these ways, to the exclusion of the other; I conclude,

clude, that God has left the matter (so far) indifferent to us ; and to be ordered according to Prudence, as the Circumstances of things and persons shall at any time direct : And as long as the Substance and Design of his Command is carefully retained, I see no necessity of being so very solicitous about a Circumstance of it; except it could evidently be made appear, that he had appointed and determined it.

53. Since then Baptism is as the Entrance or Door of Admittance into the Church of Christ, it will follow, that all they, and they only who are duly qualified to be Members of his Church, are fit to have

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have Baptism administred to them. If any person has been brought up out of the Church, until he comes to years of understanding and knowledge; he is then, and only then, qualified to be a Member of the Church, when, having repented of all his former sins, he believes and owns that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and consequently receives and professes that Faith and Doctrine which he has taught and authorized, and obliges himself to live according to all those Laws and Rules which he has prescribed to us; this being the very Condition which our Saviour indispensably requires from his Church, and every Member

Member of it, according as they are capable of performing it. But if a Child be born of Christian Parents, or is so in the hands of Christian Guardians, as that it is in their power to bring him up in the true Religion; and they do promise and engage so to educate him; such a Child as this, even before he comes to any knowledge of things, is yet qualified to be a Member of the Church of Christ (upon the presumption that he will perform what God requires from him when he comes to be capable of it) and so to continue, if, by Apostacy or wickedness, he does not, in process of time, separate himself again from

from it. For this, beyond dispute was the case of Infants, before the coming of Christ, who at eight days old (if Males) were to be Circumcised, and thereby admitted into the Church of God, and within his Covenant, if they were either the Sons, or Servants born in the House, of believing persons, and who, as well as their Parents, are expressly said to enter into Covenant with God, which is but another expression for becoming of his Church: And no one surely will offer to say, that the Case of Infants is made worse than it was, by our Saviours coming into the World; especially, since he has

has expressly commanded, that little Children should come unto him, and not be forbidden; for that of such is the Kingdom, that is, the Church of God. I conclude therefore, that not only *adult persons, who make a due profession of their Faith and Repentance; but also such Infants as are in a way of being brought up in the Christian Religion,* we, without any Obstacle, to be admitted to Baptism.

54. There are some passages in the New Testament, which seem plainly to suggest to us, that it was a constant Custom with the Apostles of Christ, to lay their Hands upon all such as had been Baptized (which laying
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on of Hands was undoubtedly accompanied with Prayer to God) in order to their receiving the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit of God: But that this was a thing positively prescribed, and commanded, I do not find clearly proved: And therefore, altho I dare not hastily condemn those particular Churches, where this same Custom is disused or intermitted; yet since the Grace and Assistance of the Holy Ghost, in order to the leading of a good life, and obtaining eternal Happiness, is for ever continued unto the Church, as I have said Part 2. §. 42. and therefore ought ever to be sought for (altho the working

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ing of Miracles and speaking of all Languages, without learning them, be ceased from amongst us) I cannot but conclude, that the laying on of Hands upon persons that have been baptized, together with Prayer to God for their growth and continuance in Grace, which is commonly called *Confirmation*, is a prudent and godly Custom, and ever fit to be continued in the Church.

55. As every particular Man whatsoever is obliged, in his own private person, to honour and worship God; so the Church, being a Society incorporated for the better serving of God, is under an Obligation to do the same in her associated

ated capacity, that is to say,
to assemble together for his wor-
ship. And because the whole
Number of Christians, which
are dispersed over the Face of
the Earth, are not capable of
meeting together in one place;
the Universal Church there-
fore lies under a necessity of
subdividing it self into parti-
cular Churches; and those a-
gain into particular Congre-
gations, according as they find
to be most convenient for the
pursuing that same end for
which they are so incorpora-
ted. Moreover, since all these
particular Churches and Con-
gregations are still, or ought
to be, but Parts and Members
of that One Catholick Church
which our Saviour Christ has
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appointed and founded, it follows, that none of them ought to constitute or act any thing amongst themselves; which may give a just occasion for the breaking of that Union and Concord which he designed, and has commanded always to be maintained amongst them. But on the contrary, Matters ought every where so to be ordered, as that if a Member of any one particular Church should travel into any other part of the World, he may meet with nothing in any Christian Congregation, where he comes, which justly should be a hindrance to him from assembling or communicating with

56. *The particular acts to be performed in these Christian Assemblies, are all such as tend to the Edification of the People in Virtue and Godliness (which is the design of their Incorporation) and consequently, to the promoting of each mans eternal Salvation (which is the end that every Christian is supposed to pursue.) All which are reducible to these Two Heads, viz. Devotion towards God, which includes Confession of sins, Prayer for all things necessary, both for themselves and others, and Praising of God, as well for his own Excellency and Perfection, as for his Love and Beneficence to all Mankind: And 2. the Instruction of the People*

People which are assembled ; which is to be done by Reading and Explaining the Holy Scriptures, Catechizing, Preaching, &c. But there is one act of Devotion towards God to be performed in such publick Assemblies, which is commonly known by the name of the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, or the Holy Communion ; of which it will be fit to say something more particularly, because it is an Ordinance altogether of positive Institution, as well as Baptism, of which I have already spoken.

57. As our Saviours Death and Passion, which he underwent for the sins of the whole World, should ever out of

Gratitude, be remembred by us in the most emphatical and affecting manner; so except we have, every one of us, a share and interest in that Attonement which he thereby made to God for us, we cannot, by the Terms of the Gospel, hope for eternal Salvation. In order then to both these Ends he himself before his Death appointed it, as a perpetual Ordinance, for ever to be continued in his Church, that Bread should be blessed, broken, and eaten; and a Cup also blessed, distributed and drank, in such assemblies as should meet together in his Name, not only as a Remembrance of his Sufferings for us, which are thereby shewn forth and represented;

ted; but also as the Communion, that is to say, the exhibition of his Body and Blood unto, and the participation of them; by all faithful and good Christians. To say with the Roman Church, that the Substance of Bread and Wine, being blessed or consecrated in this Ordinance, are transubstantiated or turned into the very, real Substance, of the Body and Blood of Christ, so as that that very same Body of his which was crucified, and that Blood which was shed, are wholly and intirely received into the bodily Mouth, and swallowed down by every Communicant, does not only draw after it such monstrous Absurdities, as no Man, I

think, without renouncing his Reason, can digest, nor can be inferred from any passage of Scripture interpreted according to the Rules which I have laid down, Part 1. §. 25. and 33. But is also directly contrary even to the Letter, as well as Meaning of the New Testament; in which the Bread, in this Holy Institution, is plainly called Bread (and by the same Rule the Wine must still remain Wine, as to its natural substance) even after the Blessing or Consecration of it. As therefore I must needs conclude, that the Body and Blood of Christ are not received by the Members of his Church after that manner, which they of *Rome* do

do define; so must it also follow, that their Worshipping of the Host and pretended Sacrifice of Christ in the Mass, together with their depriving the Laity of the Cup (which besides other Absurdities do wholly depend upon the Doctrine of Transubstantiation) are none other than meer human and unlawful Inventions and practices. But since a Man may then be said truly to receive and partake of any thing, tho at never so great a distance from him, when he has a real Interest in it, and enjoys the Benefit and Advantage of it (as a Man may have an Estate, and reap the Profits of it, tho it lies in a far distant Country) I do

therefore conclude, that the way whereby we do receive, or communicate in, the Body and Blood of Christ, by this Ordinance, is by being made Partakers of those Benefits which by the Crucifying of his Body, and the shedding of his Blood do accrue to us; and that whosoever eats of this Bread, and drinks of this Cup in such a manner as Christ has appointed, has thereby assuredly a share of those Benefits held forth and conveyed unto him.

58. How often *this Ordinance is to be practised and repeated* in every Congregation, is not expressly determined, either by Christ or his Apostles; and therefore can only be

be regulated by the Prudence of the Church it self: But common Reason will tell us, that it should be *so often at least, as may be sufficient to preserve a fresh and lively Remembrance of the Sufferings of our Saviour in the minds of the People*; this being one main End of its first Institution. And so often therefore ought every Christian, who is arrived to years of understanding (for such only are capable of doing any thing in remembrance of another) to come and be partakers of it. For to contemn or neglect this Ordinance, which Christ has appointed for such a peculiar End, argues a great slight and disregard of his Death and

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Passion (besides the Disobedience to his Command) and therefore is justly to be looked on as a very great and heinous sin.

59. As it is a great Affront, and even a Mocking of God, for a Man to draw near to him in any of his Ordinances, without a sincere and well-meaning heart (for which Reason Hypocrisy in Scripture is represented as most odious, and the Prayer and Sacrifice of a wicked Man, whilst he continues such, is said to be an Abomination unto God) so does he seem to resent such a Practice in no instance more than in this of the Holy Communion ; of which he who eats and drinks unworthily, is expressly

ly said by the Apostle to be guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ, and to eat and drink Damnation to himself: Which Expressions altho they are differently interpreted by divers persons, yet in whatever sense we take them, they do abundantly shew, that God is in a particular manner offended with those, who any way profane this sacred Institution. *It therefore is the Duty,* and ought very much to be the concern, *of every Christian first,* to *examin himself,* and to make the best trial and enquiry that he can, whether he be truly sincere in his resolutions of serving and obeying God faithfully all his life-long (for any person who is thus disposed,
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and none other, is ever acceptable to God) *And then* with Devotion and Reverence suitable unto such Sincerity, to come and *eat of this Bread, and drink of this Cup*: That as, on the one side, he may not neglect what Christ has commanded and required; so, on the other, he may not incur the Penalty which is threatened to an unworthy Receiver.

60. He that worships or prays to God by himself alone, may do it as well by offering up only the inward Thoughts and Desires of his Mind, which are clearly seen and known unto God, as by expressing himself outwardly by Words; which tho even in our private Devotions they may be very proper

proper to keep our Minds intent upon what we are about; yet are no way necessary to inform God of what we think or wish for. But when a Society of Men do meet to joyn together in God's worship, their Devotion must of necessity be outwardly expressed in Words; because there is no other way of keeping their Thoughts (wherein their Worship does consist) united and joyned together. And since Words not understood are in effect the same with no Words at all; I conclude, that *the Language wherein the Worship of any Church or Congregation is offered up to God, must always be such as is well understood by the Assembly of the People*

ple who meet together. Nor does even the Doctrine of Transubstantiation amaze me more than that the Church of *Rome* should own the 14th. Chapter of *St. Paul's* first Epistle to the *Corinthians* to be the Word of God, and yet have all their publick Services every where performed in the Latine Tongue only, which is not now understood by the generality of any Nation in the World.

61. As *Peace and Unity, mutual Love and good Agreement* amongst the Members of every Society, *together with Order and Decency* in all that is transacted amongst them, are absolutely necessary to the being and continuance, or at least

least to the well-being of the Society it self; so *are* they carefully prescribed and inculcated by Christ and his Apostles, as things *to be always preserved and maintained in the Christian Church.* And as he, who first occasions the violation of any of them, is plainly guilty of a very great sin; so in all Matters that are not particularly and clearly determined by God's Law, we cannot propose a better and safer Rule to our selves, than always to do that which tends most to the advancement and preservation of them.

62. If some certain time be not determined for Christians to meet together for God's Worship, which every Man may

may know of before it comes, and accordingly prepare himself for it by laying aside, for that time, his worldly Business; Disorder and Confusion (which is the natural Consequence of Uncertainty) must needs follow. That one Day at least, in seven was expressly required by God, under the Mosaick Law, to be sanctified and set a part for his Service, is beyond dispute. That the Observation of the Jewish Sabbath, or the last Day of the Week is not required from the Christian Church, to me seems very evident from St. Paul's reckoning it amongst the transitory *Shadows* of the old Law, Col. 2. 17. But that we Christians ought not to be behind-hand

hand with the Jews, in setting apart a proportion of our time for God's Service, I think will follow as well from the great Mercies which we have received from him; for which we, no less than they, ought to shew and express our Thankfulness; as also from that general Rule which our Saviour has given us, that our Righteousness should even exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. And that accordingly one Day in seven, namely the First Day of the Week (which in Scripture is therefore called the Lord's Day, *Rev. i. 10.*) has ever been so set apart for the Service of God in all Christian Churches, I presume will be

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be denied by none; As also, that the Reason of the Apostles making choice of this particular Day, was in remembrance of our Saviour's glorious Resurrection, which on that Day was performed, and whereby their Faith in him, which began to waver, was confirmed and raised above all doubt or diffidence. Now since no Reason can be given, or so much as imagined why this Day should be changed for any other Day of the Week; I do from what has been said conclude, that *the Lord's Day*, or First Day of the Week, *ought for ever to be kept holy in the Christian Church; and particularly dedicated to the Service of God.* And where either
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the Church universal, or any particular Church has set aside any other days to be kept holy, in remembrance either of any of God's Mercies to us; or of the Martyrdom of any of his chosen Saints, who sealed the Truth of the Gospel with their Lives, and transmitted it so confirmed down unto us; or as Days of Fasting or Abstinence, in order to humble our selves before God for our Sins; since in all this there is nothing contrary to God's Law; nor any thing but what may be well consistent with, and serviceable to, true Piety; It will follow from what I have said, § 61. That every Member of such a Church is obliged to keep and observe these same
other

other Holy Days, so far as no way to give Scandal, disturb the Order, or break the Peace of the Church, which has established them.

63. Order and Decency necessarily require that *all the outward circumstances of Worship*, which God himself has not determined by his own Law, *should be so settled by the Church*, as that all Confusion and Unseemliness therein may, as much as is possible, be avoided. But care on the other side ought ever to be taken, that Modes and Ceremonies be not so multiplied as to become uneasy and burdensome, or distract the Devotion of the People. Now there being no such fixed and demonstrable

monstrable Rules of Decency and Order, but what will have a different relish with different Men, according to their several Educations, and Customs to which they may have been used; it will be very difficult, if not impossible; for any Church so to regulate these external matters as to please every Mans Fancy, and give disgust to none: For what some may think to be but decent, others may take to be too formal or pompous; and what these may apprehend to be suitable to the Simplicity of Christianity, another sort may look on as mean and jejune. As therefore the Church in this case can do no more, but act according to the

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the best of her Prudence; so since every Man cannot expect to have his particular Fancy in these things pleased and gratified; *It will evidently appear to be the Duty of each private Christian, so far to comply with every such constitution of the Church where he dwells (provided there be nothing in it which is sinful) as not to break the Peace and Unity, or disturb the Order of the Church on that account.* But if any Church shall offer to impose any Ceremonies or practices whatsoever (which God has not prescribed, and which therefore are in themselves indifferent) not for Decency and Order; but as things in themselves Holy, or absolutely

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ly necessary to Salvation (as some of old would have done by the Jewish Ceremonies) with such Impositions as these no Christian ought at all to comply ; nor suffer his Religion or Conscience to be thus burthened : But every Man must stand fast in that Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free ; tho at the same time he must be very careful not to pretend, or use this Liberty as a Cloke of Maliciousness.

64. Since different Opinions in matters of Religion are generally apt to beget Dissensions and Animosities between those who entertain them, as our dayly Experience does abundantly testifie; It ought to be the Church's, and every
 private

private Christian's endeavour, that all Men may become of one and the same Judgment, or at least, that there may be as few Differences amongst them as is possible. *When therefore any religious Dispute arises, whereby the Church's Peace and Unity is like to be endangered, It is free and proper for* (Nor is there any thing which should hinder) *either the Church universal, or any particular Church, or even any prudent Men whatsoever, to declare and publish their sense of the matter in debate.* But as no Man can be obliged to believe the Determination of any Church or party whatsoever, any farther than he is convinced and satisfied of its agree-

agreement with Reason and the Holy Scriptures, Part 2. §. 1, and 2. so is not any Man bound to oppose or dispute even against an Error it self; except there be something in it which is injurious to Christian Faith or practice; and consequently which may prove pernicious to Men's Salvation. And therefore if such a Mistake, which may have prevailed in any Church, cannot well be rectified without endangering the breach of Peace and Charity (because they who hold it, it may be, are obstinately wedded to it) I think *it is the Duty of us all* to be very tender in such a case, and to permit every Man freely to abound in his own

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Sense, until such time as God shall think fit to bring them to a clearer sight of the Truth. And by *no means* to renounce the *Communion of any Church on the account of any Error that is not damnable*; and much less on account only of such Terms or Expressions as are but abstruse or of doubtful signification. For otherwise since the Apprehensions of Men are so very different (especially in such things as being remote from our Senses are matter only of rational Speculation) if Difference of Opinion upon such theological Questions, as do not immediately concern our Salvation, were a sufficient ground for Separation in point of Communion, there

would

would soon be probably almost as many Churches as Men in the World. But if any Church shall require from a Man, either to comply with, or practise, any thing, which is, not only against his Fancy in point of Decency or Convenience, but also against his Conscience in point of Lawfulness; or that he should not only be silent and not oppose, but also explicitly profess the Belief of, any such Doctrines as he judges to be false (however innocent the Belief of them may be to them who think them true) and if such a Church shall refuse and deny her Communion to all those who will not joyn with her upon these Terms; We

must rather be contented to be excluded from such a Church's Communion, than to purchase it by solemnly telling a down-right Lye before God and the World, or by the violation of any other of God's Commands: For if we offer to do Evil that Good may come of it, *St. Paul* has declared us to be in a state of Damnation.

65. For the due regulation of every Society, it is necessary that it have a Power, somewhere or other vested in it, over its own Members, either to compel them to live orderly, according to its Laws and Constitutions, or, if any of them are disobedient and refractory, and will not,
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upon due admonition, be reclaimed ; wholly to exclude them from the Body of the Community. For, otherwise, if the Members of any Society may at their pleasure break its Constitutions, and violate its Laws without control, this would be wholly to pull down the Enclosure, and lay all open and common, as before ; and consequently, in effect to dissolve the Society it self. And accordingly our Saviour has given the Church a Power to admonish and rebuke those who give any scandal by their ungodly and unruly Behaviour ; and if upon this they do not repent and reform, of rejecting and cutting them off from her Communion. Which

Authority must ever be exercised with due mildness and caution, for the edification, and not with heat and fury, which in the end would more probably tend to the destruction of the Church. But if any Church shall go beyond this to punish or persecute Men, with Fire and Sword or with Fines and Imprisonment, only for being of a different persuasion from, and refusing to communicate with, her; In my Opinion she herein acts contrary to that Mildness and Gentleness which the Gospel upon all occasions prescribes; and particularly in the case of dealing with those who oppose themselves to it, 2 *Tim.* 2. 24.

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Altho at the same time it cannot be denyed, but that if any Man, under the pretence of Conscience, or Religion, shall advance such Doctrines or do such acts as are destructive to the peace or safety of the civil State or Commonwealth; the civil Magistrate may, and ought to punish such a person according to the Laws of the Land, notwithstanding all his pretences. For if the Plea of Conscience (the truth of which can only be known to Almighty God) be sufficient to save any Malefactor from Punishment, no civil Society can ever be safe, and all humane Laws and Magistrates would be wholly useless. See Part 1. p. 35.

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66. And as Almighty God in his Mercy is pleased not to cut the greatest sinners off from all hopes of pardon; but is ready at any time, upon their true and sincere Repentance, to receive them again into his Favour, so has he committed unto *the Church* the ministry of Reconciliation; which Church therefore accordingly ought not only to endeavour to bring sinners to Repentance by Preaching, Admonition and Exhortation; but also wherever she sees evident Marks and Tokens of it in any person (of which yet there ought to be good assurance) for his greater comfort and ease of Conscience, to remit or absolve him from his sins,
and

and restore him again to the benefit and privilege of Christian Communion, of which I suppose that he has, or ought to have, been deprived: And whatever Sentence of thus binding or loosing, remitting or retaining of Men's sins is duly and regularly pronounced by the Church upon Earth, our Saviour assures us it shall be ratified and confirmed by God in Heaven. But that a Man is obliged to make a particular Confession of all his sins unto any other person, except God, in order to obtain the Pardon of, or Absolution from them; as I nowhere find it asserted in the Holy Scripture; so the reason which the Roman Divines

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do allege for it, is very weak and unconcluding: For it is not the particular Confession of a Man's sins (which may be performed by the most hardened impenitent) but his Contrition, and the visible reformation of his life (which may sufficiently appear without a particular Confession) that only can enable the Church or her Ministers to judge whether he truly repents of his sins or not, and consequently whether he be a proper Object of God's Mercy and the Church's Favour. Altho I deny not but that in some cases it may be very proper for a Man to make known the diseases of his Soul to a prudent Spiritual Physician,

Physician, that he may have his advice for the cure of them. And his Duty also to make an open Confession of his sins whenever it is necessary for God's Glory, or to repair any publick scandal which has been given by him.

67. That Almighty God, even where he has pardoned a Man's sins upon his true Repentance, may yet, on the score of those very sins which he has so pardoned, lay some sharp and severe temporal Afflictions upon the penitent, either to keep him more effectually from sinning for the time to come, or that it may be a Terror to others; or for many other reasons best known to himself, is a thing
that

that cannot be disputed. But from hence to infer, that these temporal Afflictions, if not laid on us in this World, are to be undergone in Purgatory, and that therefore, for the preventing them, it is fit and necessary *that Penance should be imposed by way of satisfaction, or Indulgences granted by way of Remission*; and all this without any Warrant from the Holy Scripture, save only a faint and forced Consequence from some few perverted Texts; *is a thing so groundless and precarious*, that it amazes me to think how Men can suffer themselves to be so grossly imposed upon. And whosoever shall duly consider upon what weak grounds the

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Pope and his Prelates do pretend to a Power of dispensing and distributing the Merits of Christ unto the People by way of Indulgence (as if they alone had the keeping of that Treasure under Lock and Key ; and to which, tho, infinite, they have yet added the Merits of the Saints to make their Treasure more abundant) will, I think, very much wonder that their People should be so free to part with their earthly Treasure in purchasing these Indulgences upon no better security.

68. That the Apostles of Christ, when they were first sent abroad to preach the glad Tidings of the Gospel, did anoint many sick persons with Oyl,

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Oyl, and thereby miraculously heal them, we are plainly told by St. *Mark*, c. 6. v. 13. And that in this they did no more than what Christ himself had expressly commanded them, is most reasonable and probable to suppose. Moreover, that the anointing with Oyl, which is mentioned by St. *James*, c. 5. v. 14. was intended for the very same purpose; viz. the raising up the sick person and restoring him to Health, is as apparent as any thing can be from the very Context. But as we do not find that this anointing of the sick was appointed either by Christ or his Apostles, as a standing and perpetual Ordinance for ever to be used in the Church;

Church; so since Experience shews, that the miraculous effect of healing thereby is now wholly ceased; I can see no reason why the practice it self should be any longer continued. But what just ground the Church of Rome can have from either of these, or any other place of Scripture for the divine Institution of their Extreme Unction, which they make use of for a far different end, namely the preparing thereby of persons who are past hopes of recovery, for their passage into the next life, is more than I am able to find out.

69. As the Body natural would be but a confused and useless Lump, if it were not distin-

distinguished into the several Members, which are necessary for its own Service and preservation : And as the Body-politick would be but a disorderly Rabble, if there were not Magistrates settled to rule and govern, and ministerial Officers appointed to perform all necessary Functions in and about it ; so the Holy Scripture, as well as Reason, assures us (and the practice of the apostolical Church, which is there recorded, confirms it) that the like Appointment and distinction of Offices are no less necessary in the Church ; in order to the regular and orderly government of it, and the due execution of all its Laws and Constitutions. But
how

how far these Offices are limited and appointed by the Law of God, or how far left to be settled, and determined by the Prudence of the Church, according as Circumstances may render it convenient, is what I shall not take upon me to pronounce my Sentence in. But *whatever Polity or ecclesiastical Constitution is settled and acquiesced in, either by the whole Church in general, or by that of any Nation or Country in particular, I think, ought quietly to be submitted to by every one who would be a Member of such respective Church, except there appears to him to be either something therein, which is not only uncommanded, but even contrary*

trary to the Law of God;
or else something wanting,
which God requires, and
therefore is absolutely neces-
sary to be maintained and
kept up in all Churches. Nor
can I apprehend that any less
Warrant can be sufficient for
breaking or endangering the
Peace or Unity of the Church
(the preservation of which is
so often and so earnestly re-
commended to us in the Holy
Scripture) besides the abso-
lute necessity of obeying the
Positive Command of God
himself. And therefore, since
the Government of the Church
by Bishops, that is to say, by
certain persons having in
their several Districts a Pri-
ority among, and in some re-
spects

spects a Superiority over, the Presbyters ; has for so many Ages been universally settled amongst, and acquiesced in by, all Christians in all parts of the World ; I cannot find how they can be excused, who (without any necessity for so doing) have so earnestly set themselves, not only to retrench the Excesses, and rectifie the Abuses of the episcopal Power ; but also to pull down, and wholly abolish, the very Order it self ; to the no small scandal of those who think that so universal a Constitution, every where taking place, even in the primitive Church, could be grounded on no less than an Apostolick Ordinance (of which

which there seems to be some, not obscure, Foot-steps in the Scriptures of the New Testament) and that most probably in conformity to that Imparity which Christ himself established between the Apostles and the seventy Disciples ; who were yet both commissioned by him to preach the Gospel.

70. How far a case of necessity may, upon some occasions, excuse or justify a Man for taking on him an Office which regularly does not belong to him, especially if his design therein be truly honest and sincere, I know not. But *no Man* certainly *ought to intrude into any ecclesiastical Function; or exercise any*
such

such Office, who is not called and admitted thereunto by the lawful Authority, and according to the established Constitutions of the Society. For if this be not carefully observed, the distinction of Offices and Functions in the Church is in effect wholly taken away; and a wide Door opened for Confusion and Anarchy. But then on the other side, good care ought ever to be taken by the Church, that no persons be entrusted with any sacred Office, but such as are duly qualified for it; And that such a Maintainance be provided and settled for every such person, as that he may not be necessitated to neglect the publick Service of God and the due
15b exercise

exercise of his Function, by being constrained to bestow and spend overmuch of his Time and Labour in getting a Living for himself and his Family.

71. I have now gone through what I at first designed; and have not, that I know of, omitted any one thing which I could judge to be a material or necessary part of Religion; Altho I have on purpose endeavoured to avoid the use of some Words, which do frequently occur in all or most Systems of Divinity that I have met with; And the reason why I have so done, is not that I find fault with the Words themselves; but because I would have my Reader

der take notice that *Religion* does not consist in *Terms of Art* or *forms of expression*; but in the belief and practice of such things as God has made known, and requires from us; And it is too common among Men to wrangle about Words, before they have clearly fixed and agreed upon the meaning of them. I have not, for example, made use of this Term *Justification*; But yet I have endeavoured to shew upon what conditions a sinner obtains the Pardon of his sins and Mercy at the hand of God; which is the same thing: Nor have I said any thing of the nature or number of *Sacraments*: But I have spoken what I thought might be necessary

cessary concerning Baptism, the Holy Communion, and those other things which the Church of Rome calls by that name. And if once I am satisfied touching any thing, how far God requires it from us, and whether or no it be necessary to Salvation; I cannot see why I should trouble my self much in enquiring, whether such a thing may properly be called a Sacrament or not, which to me seems no more but a dispute about the meaning of a Word. True indeed, it is, that in the Doctrine of the Trinity, which I have delivered, Part 2. §. 22. I have expressly made use of the Terms *person, substance, &c.* because I could find none others

thers so fit and proper to express my Thoughts ; Nor durst I venture in so sublime a matter to apply new Words to those things of which I can have but very imperfect and obscure Conceptions. And having thus said all that I intend upon this occasion, I freely submit the Whole to the Judgment and Censure of every Reader ; leaving him to that liberty which I my self always desire to enjoy ; and being ready to retract any thing that I have said, whenever I am convinced that I have been therein mistaken.

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F I N I S.

A N
APPENDIX
T O A
GENTLEMAN's
RELIGION:

In which it is Proved,

That nothing contrary to
our Reason, can possibly be
the Object of our Belief;
But that it is no just Excep-
tion against some of the Do-
ctrines of Christianity, that
they are above our Reason.

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. Sare, at Grays-Inn-Gate,
in Holbourn, 1698.

APPENDIX
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APPENDIX
T O A

Gentleman's Religion.

1. **H**OW those Persons who take unto themselves the distinguishing Name of *Unitarians*, do dissent from the main Body of *Christians*, of whatsoever Church or Perswasion, touching the Doctrines of the Trinity, and the Incarnation of our Saviour Christ, is so well known, that I need not here offer to open or explain the Terms of the Contröversie which is managed between them. Now when in this Dispute the *Unitarians* are prest with some passages of Scripture, which seem very evidently to make against them,

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besides other ways which they have to avoid the force of them, they commonly have recourse to the nature of the thing controverted; and press their Adversaries back again with this demand, How such a thing can possibly be? And when to this it is reply'd, That there is evidently no Contradiction to sound Reason in the Doctrines themselves, and that the Truth of them ought to be believed upon the Authority of God, who hath revealed them: But that the manner of them is utterly above, and altogether incomprehensible to our finite and narrow Understandings, and therefore not to be enquired after. In return to this, there are some who maintain, that if these Doctrines were not contrary to Reason, yet this alone is a sufficient cause to reject them, that they are confessedly above it. For of that which is above our Reason (say they) we can form no true Conception, or Idea; and it is absurd, or rather impossible for a Man to believe, that which he cannot clearly and plainly so much as conceive or apprehend.

2. For the right stating and clearing of this whole Controversie, I have given
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ven such hints in the *Gentleman's Religion*, Part 1. Sect. 33. and Part 2. Sect. 2. 22, 23, 37. as I thought to be most fit for Men of ordinary Capacity, and most suitable to that brevity which I all along designed. But in this Appendix, I shall address my self unto those, who are of a more refined Understanding, and accustomed to a more exact way of thinking; and try if I can give them any satisfaction in a Matter, which seems to be not a little perplexed, perhaps by the overmuch Curiosity of some of both the contending Parties.

3. That our Knowledge of things is but short and imperfect, is confessed on all sides. It is also very evident, that no Language whatsoever will afford us variety of Words sufficient to express all the Diversities and Peculiarities of our Thoughts, so as to secure them from the Mistakes of Ignorance, or Misapprehension, and the Cavils of Perverseness; but that after all our Care, our most cautious Expressions will sometimes be liable to be misinterpreted to a contrary, or at least, wrested to a different meaning, from what we intended, And therefore the most

Acute and Judicious Writer will probably find himself much mistaken, if he at any time hopes so to handle any Controversie as to satisfy every Man. But since, upon the strictest Examination which I have been able to make, I am my self fully convinced of the Truth of what I have concluded in this Dispute, I will now (with God's Assistance) try, whether I can express my Thoughts with so much clearness, and prove them with such sufficient Arguments, and pertinent Instances, as may give some Satisfaction to others also : And that I may the more effectually do this, I shall endeavour to proceed as near as I can in such a Method, as is always used in Mathematical Demonstrations.

4. This word *Doctrine* is but another Term for a *Proposition*; and what a *Proposition* is, or when it is said to be true or false, certain, probable, or doubtful, I need not spend time to explain.

5. *Reason* is that faculty in Man (for I meddle not with the Knowledge of Angels) whereby he apprehends things, and their Attributes or Properties ; and frames a Judgment concerning what he apprehends. And also from those Judgments

ments which he makes, draws sometimes more immediate, or more remote and distant Consequences.

6. The Truth of some Propositions is so very plain, that as no Man in his Senses can deny them, so is it impossible to find out any thing which is more plain whereby to prove them. And such Propositions as these I call *self-evident* : Such for Example are, That *all the parts of a thing taken together are equal to the whole*. That *both parts of a Contradiction cannot be true at the same time* ; and the like.

7. When the Truth of a Proposition does not immediately appear by its own light, but yet the Proposition can, beyond question, be proved from other Propositions which are self-evident ; such a Proposition as this I term to be *built upon Reason alone*. Such for instance are, That *two Triangles, having equal bases, and being contained between the same parallel Lines, are equal* ; and all other Propositions which are capable of being demonstrated, or clearly proved from the bare Principles of Reason.

8. Where the possibility of a Proposition (*i. e.* that it implies no Contradiction)

dition) can be evidently proved from the Principles of Reason alone, but yet the actual Truth and Reality of it cannot the same way be made appear, such a Proposition as this I call *reconcilable to Reason*. Thus for Example; That an Oak should grow up to its full and usual Stature, in an hour, is as possible (that is to say, as free from Contradiction) as that it should do the same in an hundred years ; (for all growth is motion, and the swiftness of motion may be for ever increased) but that ever this was actually so, cannot be proved by any Arguments drawn from Reason.

9. Where any Proposition (either immediately in it self, or mediately in its Consequences) does plainly contradict any other Proposition which is either self-evident, or built upon Reason, such a Proposition as this I term to be *contrary to Reason*; such for Example is this Proposition, That the three Angles of a Triangle are equal to three right Angles, and such like.

10. Where a Proposition is in it self true, but we are unable clearly to apprehend or frame a Notion or Conception of the things contained under the terms

terms of it, such a Proposition I term to be *above Reason*. And a Proposition may be either wholly and altogether above our Reason, when we can frame no manner of Conception of the things spoken of, or else but partly above it, when some Notions of the things we have, but those very obscure and imperfect. Thus the Doctrine of Light and Colours, is wholly above the Reason of a Man born blind, who can frame no manner of Notion of these things from the Description which others make of them, because he is altogether destitute of proper Organs to receive any Impression from the things themselves. But the same Doctrine would not be so much above the Reason of a Man, who had some faint and confused glimmering of Sight; tho' still much more above his Reason than it would be if he were endowed with the faculty of clear and distinct Sight, as other Men commonly are.

11. To *know*, is to give assent to a Proposition when it evidently appears to be built upon Reason. But when the Truth of a Proposition is assented to, not upon Arguments drawn from the Reason, or the Nature of the thing,
but

but upon account of the Veracity, and Authority of the Person or Persons who affirm it ; such a Proposition as that is said to be *believed*. Furthermore, If a Man understands not the meaning of a Proposition, and yet believes that it contains a Truth in it, because of the deference he pays to the Person who speaks it ; this I call an *implicit belief*: And properly speaking, the Object of such a belief is not the Truth of the Proposition it self, but only the Veracity of the Speaker. But where a Man understands the meaning of the Proposition which he believes, this I call an *Explicit Belief*.

12. *No Man can possibly believe or give his Assent to any Doctrine or Proposition which appears to him to be contrary to Reason, (see Sect. 9.)* For to own a Proposition to be self-evident, or built upon Reason, and yet at the same time to believe another which mediately, or immediately, is contradictory to it, is absolutely impossible.

13. *If a Proposition be reconcilable to Reason, (Sect. 8.) and the Truth of it also testified by such Persons whose Veracity is beyond all doubt, or exception; such a Proposition cannot but be believed by any*
one

one unto whom it comes so testified. For if it be reconcilable to Reason, then it may possibly be true ; (Sect. 8.) and if I am actually convinced of the Veracity of the Person or Persons, who relate it, I cannot choose but believe that it is True. From whence I think it evidently follows, that Revelation, or the Testimony of another, may justly be looked upon, not only as a means of Information, but also as a motive of Persuasion, whatever a late Author says to the contrary.

14. But that which is most material in this present Controversie, is what I am now going to make appear, viz. That a Man may have most sufficient, and cogent Arguments, to give his Assent to such Propositions as are not only in part, but wholly, and altogether above his Reason. (Sect. 10.) For the clear and plain evincing of which, I shall crave leave to make a Relation of a Conference which once I had with a blind Man ; to whom, when I understood that he had been quite blind from his Infancy, and never could remember to have seen the least glimmering of Light, I had the Curiosity to put several questions. I asked him first of all, Whether ever
he

he had endeavoured to frame any Notion or Conception, of Light or Colours, of which I suppose he had often heard mention to be made in common Discourse? To which he answered me, That he had often endeavoured it with the greatest Application of his Mind that possibly he could. And to that end and purpose he had made it his Business to ask all the questions he could think of, whereby to get Information, but all to no purpose; for that he was still altogether as ignorant of the Nature of Light and Colours, and as unable to frame any Conception of them, as if he had never before heard the Names of them. He told me moreover, that he was a long time before he would, or could believe, that other Men had any faculty at all which he wanted. For, says he, I was sensible of no Defect or Imperfection in myself, but believed my self to be altogether as perfect as all other Men with whom I conversed; and therefore when they told me that I was blind, and talked to me of Light and Colours, I apprehended for a great while, that they did it only to impose upon me. But are you now convinced, said I, that

that you are blind ; and that other Men have the faculty of Sight, which you want ? Yes, replied he, I am fully satisfied and convinced of it. How can that be, said I. when you can frame no manner of Notion of Light or Colours, which are the Objects of Sight ? Thus answered he, I was convinced of it: They would put me at a distance from them, and yet would tell me every thing that I did ; as whether I stood, or sat, or held up my Hand, or let it down, or the like: Whereas I could not discover any thing which they did, except I were close to them, and felt them carefully with my Hands. Now by this, continued he, I am fully convinced, that other Men have a faculty which I want, whereby they can discover and distinguish things at a distance, which they call *Sight*: And I am told by all Men, that there is something called *Light*, which is diffused through the Air, and is the Instrument whereby they are enabled to exercise this faculty ; and also that the *Colour* and *Shape* of things are the Objects upon which the same is employed. But although I can by my touch distinguish between the different

shapes of some things, and so can frame a Notion of *Shape*: Yet what *Light* is, or what *Colours* are, I have not the least Conception; although I am, as I have told you, sufficiently convinced, that some such things there are. Now this Relation being (for the substance of it) true; to my own Knowledge, or at least (as every Man will own it to be) possible and rational; it will evidently follow, without any farther proof, that this Man had very good and unquestionable grounds to believe some things that were altogether above his Reason; for what Sight, Light, or Colours were, he was utterly incapable of framing, or receiving, any Idea. But yet that there were such things, and that all he heard Men discourse about them was not meer Fiction, (as he for some time apprehended) was plainly proved to him by such Arguments as every reasonable Man must allow to have been abundantly sufficient to move his Assent. Nor was this Assent of his which he gave unto these things, a bare implicit Belief; (*Sect. 11.*) as if he had been told that something did Exist, which was called *Bliſtri*; but was altogether
 igno-

ignorant of what was signified by that word, (as Mr. Toland speaks.) For although it was absolutely impossible for him to frame any direct Notion, or Conception, of the things themselves, yet by those analogous Representations which were made to him of them, he well might be, and was accordingly, not only fully convinced, that what was spoken concerning them, was not insignificant Nonsense ; but also enabled to frame some sort of representative Conception of them, which is more than a Man can do of *Bliſtri* ; of which he hears only the sound, but knows not the Signification. For, supposing a Man at the very time of his Birth, to be utterly deprived of his Organs of Sight ; yet, by the use of his other four Senses, he may well conceive what a faculty of Sensation is ; and how a sensible quality, or the small Particles of Matter flowing, or rebounding from a Body, and striking upon the proper Organ of Sense, do make such a peculiar Impression upon it, as to affect our Understanding with some particular Knowledge of the Body it self, whereby we are enabled to distinguish it from other Bodies. And as

he can directly apply all this to the Senses of Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching, of which he may be as good, or a better Master than other Men: So, by way of Analogy from these Senses, he will be able to make some imperfect sort of Representation to himself, what sort of thing Sight is; and what Light, and Colours are; though directly, and particularly, he knows no more of them, than if he had never heard of them. Sir *Kenelm Digby*, in his Treatise of Bodies, Chap. 28. tells us of a *Spanish* Noble Man, who was born so absolutely deaf, that if a Gun were shot off close by his Ear, he could not hear it; and yet was taught to speak very distinctly; and, by the motion of any Mans Mouth, so perfectly to understand what he said, as that he would not lose a word in a whole days Conversation. Now the Doctrine of Sounds and Musick must of Necessity have been as much above this Mans Reason, as that of Light and Colours, was above the blind Mans, of whom I but now spoke; and yet there might very good Assurance have been given to the one, that there was such a Sense as Hear-
ing,

ing, and such a thing as a Sound, as well as there was unto the other, in the case of Light and Colours.

15. And now to apply what has been said, to the Controversie concerning the Trinity, and Incarnation of our Saviour. And here the Issue which I am now trying, presupposes these three things : First, That the Texts of Scripture, which are brought to prove the Truth of these Doctrines, are sufficient for the purpose for which they are alledged, if we interpret them according to the natural Order, and usual signification of the Words and Expressions of them. Secondly, That the Doctrines themselves are not contrary to Reason, as not implying any Contradiction; see *Part 2. Sect. 22.* But Thirdly, That they are altogether above our Reason, because we cannot frame any Notion or Idea of that particular Union, and Distinction, which is between the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, or between the two Natures which are in our Lord Jesus Christ: Which three things being taken for granted, the question that is to be determined, is, Whether or no it be a sufficient ground for a Man to deny his

Assent to the Doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation of Christ, because they are above his Reason?

16. And here, in the first place, it is very plain, That although we cannot by any means comprehend the things themselves, yet we do so far understand the meaning of the Terms in which these Doctrines are expressed, as clearly to perceive that they are not a company of insignificant Words put together, to make a sound, and signify nothing. What a *Person* is, we know; though we cannot tell what sort of Persons the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are; and how their Personal Distinction between themselves, particularly and fully differs from that of Men, one from another. What it is to be *One*, we well understand, although we cannot frame an Idea of that special Union which is between those Divine Persons. What it is for one being to *generate* another, and what to *proceed* from another, we are not ignorant; although the peculiar manner of the Generation of the Son of God, and the Procession of the Holy Ghost, be beyond our Capacity to conceive. And Lastly, What it is for

two Beings to be *United* together, we can very well apprehend; although we pretend not to know the manner of That Union which is between the two Natures in the Person of Jesus Christ. From whence it plainly follows, That these Doctrines, though *above our Reason*, do yet so far stand upon equal Terms with those Doctrines which I have termed *reconcilable to Reason*, *Seet. 8.* That as our Reason may be plainly and positive convinced from its own Principles alone, of the *possibility* of the one; so is there no Principle of our Reason which can reach so far as to prove or demonstrate any *impossibility* in the other. And where there is no Contradiction, or Impossibility, in a Doctrine, it will undeniably follow, that that same Doctrine may possibly be true. And where ever a Man is convinced of the possibility of a Doctrine, if the Truth of that same Doctrine appears to him to be testified by any Person, of whose Veracity he cannot entertain any manner of doubt, he cannot refuse to give his Assent to it; as I have said, *Seet. 13.* Since then the Veracity of God admits of no manner of doubt, and the Holy Scrip-

tures are by both Parties in this Dispute allowed of, as most Authentick Records of the Doctrines of Faith, and Rules of Life, which God has made known, and revealed to the World. And lastly, since we here suppose, that the Doctrine of the Trinity, and that of the Incarnation of Christ, do neither of them contain, or imply, any Impossibility or Contradiction, although they are both of them above our Reason, it will follow, that if all, or any of the Texts of Scripture, which are brought to prove these Doctrines, being expounded according to the common way of interpreting all Books, (of which see *Part 1. Sect. 25.*) do fairly (and without being wrested) contain (either in themselves, or their evident Consequences) those same Doctrines which they are alledged to establish, there can be no just Cause why any Man should deny his Assent to them. But if, notwithstanding all this, it be still urged, that it is not possible for a Man explicitly to believe a thing of which he can frame no Conception or Idea ; I must refer him to the Story of the blind Man, *Sect. 14.* which seems to me abundantly to evince the contrary.

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And why we should not believe the Doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation, upon the Testimony of the Holy Scriptures, as well as the blind Man did the Existence of Light and Colours, upon the Testimony of other Men; joyned with that collateral Experiment which I have mentioned, I profess I can see no manner of Reason.

17. And as in my Book, *Part 3. Sect. 71.* I have advertised my Reader, that I have purposely avoided the use of certain Words and Terms, for the Reason there given: So must I desire him to take notice, that for the like Reason, I have both in my Book, and in this Appendix, omitted so much as to mention the word *Mystery*, about which, so great a Noise has of late been made. Whether this same Term *Mystery*, be always used in the New Testament, in the very same (and no other) Signification as it is understood by Heathen Authors? Or, Whether other sorts of things, by a very allowable Analogy, are not also there called Mysteries, upon account of their Obscurity; because *we know them but in part, and see them but as in a Glass darkly.* Or, Lastly, Whether there be
any

any thing in Christianity, which may properly be called a *Mystery*, according to the genuine meaning of that Term; to me seems to be no more but a Contention *about a word*, which the Apostle expressly forbids. 2 Tim. 2. 14. But whatever may be determined concerning the propriety of the Word, the thing it self seems to me, to be very evident, that there are some Doctrines in Christianity, which are above our Reason, and yet that this is no sufficient ground for the denial of our Assent to them.

18. And if I am told, that after all this, there is no greater obscurity in any of the Doctrines of Christianity, than what there is in all natural Beings, with which we most familiarly converse; whose *real Essence* we cannot penetrate, but must content our selves with a sort of Superficial Knowledge of them, which is caused by those Impressions which they make upon our outward Organs; which, at most, can be termed but a *nominal Essence*; so that even a *spire of Grass, a Stick, a Stone*, or any other natural Being, may upon this account, as truly be termed *Mysterious*, as the most sublime Doctrines

doctrines of Religion. I shall only answer, that it mightily raises my wonder, to hear Men so freely acknowledge, that in every other thing whatsoever, there is something which is above their Reason, and to which their Understanding cannot reach ; and yet, that they will not allow the same in Religion.

19. But I know it will be objected, that the first of those three Suppositions which I have laid down, *Sect. 15.* will by no means be granted by the *Unitarians* ; for they are so far from allowing the Texts of Scripture, which are brought to prove the Doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation, to be any way sufficient to that purpose ; that on the contrary, they do, with the greatest Assurance, undertake to bring other and contrary Interpretations of those very Passages, which they pretend to be far more Rational and Natural. To which I shall only Answer, that this is all that I aim at in this Appendix, that the Issue of these Controversies may be placed upon that which is the only true Foundation for it ; I mean, the Authority of the Holy Scriptures ; and that blind Men would
not

not take upon them, by the strength of their Reason, to discuss Problems, and frame Conclusions concerning Light and Colours, of which they can have no true or sufficient Idea. I am very sensible that learned Men, who have their Minds strongly prepossessed with any Opinion, may, by their Criticisms, and Paraphrases, and such like Engines, torture and screw almost any Text of Scripture, till they make it look with another Aspect from what is truly its own, and seem to confess what really it never thought or meant. But if we would always take those Interpretations which flow of themselves, and not those which are violently pressed from the Scripture, (which I think is the fairest way of expounding all Speeches and Discourses whatsoever) I cannot, for my part, see how we can otherwise conclude, concerning the Doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation, than as I have done, *Part 2. Sect. 22. 37.*

F I N I S.

